

MAY CONTINUATION OF HAROLD MACGRATH'S STORY 15
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AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS



*Contributors
for
May*

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TWENTY IN ALL



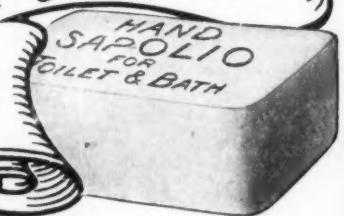
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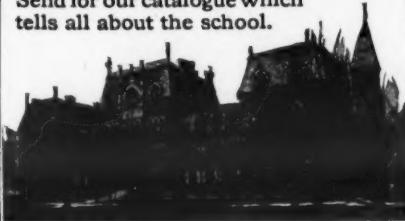
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AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

VOL. XXIII

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FOR

MAY

1909

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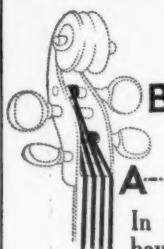
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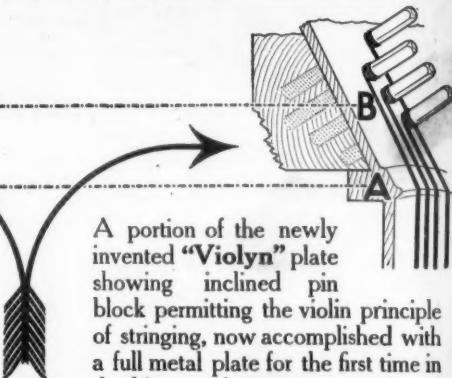
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REET



—Howard Chandler Christy 1911

"THE DUKE WAS RIGHT. THE GOOSE GIRL WAS NOT
A WHIT INFERIOR TO THE PRINCESS."

Painting by Howard Chandler Christy.

—*The Goose Girl*, page 10

THE GOOSE GIRL



BY HAROLD MACGRATH

Author of "THE MAN ON THE BOX," "THE LURE OF THE MASK," ETC.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

The American consul at Dreiberg, capital of Ehrenstein, is Arthur Carmichael. Popular with the grand duke, he is hopelessly in love with the latter's daughter, Princess Hildegarde. She had been kidnaped sixteen years before, but found by the chancellor, Count von Herbeck. The kidnapers are unknown, but the grand duke suspects the late King of Jugendheit. Carmichael befriends a beautiful goose girl, Gretchen, who has been educated by a priest and is in love with a vintner, named Leo. The present King of Jugendheit has proposed for the hand of the princess and the chancellor urges acceptance. A man named Grumbach arrives from America and makes friends with Carmichael; they had both fought in the same campaigns in the Civil War. He confides to the consul that he is really a native of Dreiberg and that there is a price upon his head, but will not tell why. The engagement of the princess to the King of Jugendheit is publicly announced, but later the chancellor is privately informed that the king refuses to marry her, alleging that the proposal was made by his uncle, the prince regent, without his consent. Herbeck does not dare to tell this to the grand duke, fearing that it will lead to war, but he informs the princess, who is rejoiced at the news.

CHAPTER IX.

GRETCHEN was always up when the morning was rosy, when the trees were still dark and motionless, and the beads of dew white and frost-like. For what is better than to meet the day as it comes over the mountains, and silence breaks here and there, in the houses and streets, in the fields and the vineyards? Let old age, which has played its part and taken to the wings of the stage, let old age loiter in the morning, but not green years. Gretchen awoke as the birds awoke, with snatches and little trill of song. To her nearest neighbors there was about her that which reminded them of the regularity of a good clock; when they heard her voice they knew it was time to get up.

She was always busy in the morning. The tinkle of a bell outside brought her to the door, and her two goats came patterning in to be relieved of their creamy burden. Gretchen was fond of them; they needed no care at all. The moment she had milked them they went tinkling off to the steep pastures.

Even in midsummer the dawn was chill in Dreiberg. She blew on her fingers. The fire was down to the last ember; so she went into the cluttered courtyard and broke into pieces one of the limbs she had carried up from the valley earlier in the season. The fire renewed its cheerful crackle, the kettle boiled briskly, and the frugal breakfast was under way.

There was daily one cup of coffee, but neither Gretchen nor her grandmother claimed this luxury; it was for the sick woman on the third floor. Sometimes at the Black Eagle she had

a cup when her work was done, but to Gretchen the aroma excelled the taste. Her grandmother's breakfast and her own out of the way, she carried the coffee and bread and a hot brick up to the invalid. The woman gave her two crowns a week to serve this morning meal. Gretchen would have cheerfully done the work for nothing.

What the character of the woman's illness was Gretchen hadn't an idea, but there could be no doubt that she was ill, desperately, had the goose-girl but known it. Her face was thin and the bones were visible under the drum-like skin; her hands were merely claws. But she would have no doctor; she would have no care save that which Gretchen gave her. Sometimes she remained in bed all the day. She had been out of the house but once since she came. She mystified the girl, for she never complained, never asked questions, talked but little, and always smiled kindly when the pillow was freshened.

"Good morning, frau," said Gretchen.
"Good morning, *liebchen*."

"I have brought you a brick this morning, for it will be cold till the sun is high."

"Thank you."

Gretchen pulled the deal table to the side of the cot, poured the coffee, and buttered the bread.

"I ought not to drink coffee, but it is the only thing that warms me. You have been very patient with me."

"I am glad to help you."

"And that is why I love you. Now, I have some instructions to give you this morning. Presently I shall be leaving, and there will be something besides crowns."

"You are thinking of leaving?"

"Yes. When I go I shall not come back. Under my pillow there is an envelope. You will find it and keep it."

Gretchen, young and healthy, touched not this melancholy undercurrent. She accepted the words at their surface value. She knew nothing about death except by hearsay.

"You will promise to take it?"

"Yes, frau."

"Thanks, little gosling. I have an errand for you this morning. It will take you to the palace."

"To the palace?" echoed Gretchen.

"Yes. Does that frighten you?"

"No, frau; it only surprises me. What shall I do?"

"You will seek her highness and give her this note."

"The princess?" Gretchen sadly viewed her wooden shoes and roughened hands.

"Never mind your hands and feet; your face will open any gate or door for you."

"I have never been to the palace. Will they not laugh and turn me out?"

"If they try that, demand to see his excellency, Count von Herbeck, and say that you came from Forty Krummerweg."

Gretchen shuddered with a mixture of apprehension and delight. To meet and speak to all these great ones!

"And if I cannot get in?"

"You will have no trouble. Be sure, though, to give the note to no one but her highness. There will be no answer. All I ask is that when you return you will tell me if you were successful. You may go."

Gretchen put the note away and went down-stairs. She decked her beautiful head with a little white cap, which she wore only on Sundays and at the Opera, and braided and beribboned her hair. It never occurred to her that there was anything unusual in the incident. It was only when she came out into the König-strasse that the puzzle of it came to her forcibly. Who was this old woman who thought nothing of writing a letter to her serene highness? And who were her nocturnal visitors? Gretchen had no patience with puzzles, so she let her mind revel in the thought that she was to see and speak to the princess whom she admired and revered. What luck! How smoothly the world was beginning to run!

Being of a discerning mind, she idled about the platz till after nine, for it had been told to her that the great slept rather late in the morning. What

should she say to her serene highness? What kind of a curtsey should she make? These and a hundred other questions flitted through her head. At least she would wear no humble, servile air. For Gretchen was a bit of a socialist. Did not Herr Goldberg, whom the police detested, did he not say that all men were equal? And surely this sweeping statement included women! She attended secret meetings in the damp cellar of the Black Eagle, and, while she laughed at some of the articles in the propaganda, she received seriously enough that which proclaimed her the equal of any one. So long as she obeyed nature's laws and heaven's, was she not indeed the equal of queens and princesses, who, it was said, did not always obey these laws?

With a confidence born of right and innocence, she proceeded toward the east or side gates of the palace. The sentry smiled at her.

"I have a letter for her serene highness," she said.

"Leave it."

"I am under orders to give it to her highness herself."

"Good day, then!" laughed the soldier. "You cannot enter the gardens without a permit."

Gretchen remembered. "Will you send some one to his excellency the chancellor and tell him I have come from Number Forty Krumerweg?"

"Krumerweg? The very name ought to close any gate. But, girl, are you speaking truthfully?"

Gretchen exhibited the note. He scratched his chin, perplexed.

"Run along. If they ask me, I'll say that I didn't see you." The sentry resumed his beat.

Gretchen stepped inside the gates, and the real beauty of the gardens was revealed to her for the first time. Strange flowers she had never seen before, plants with great broad leaves, grasslike carpet, and giant ferns, unlike anything she had plucked in the valleys and the mountains. It was all a fairy-land. There were marble urns with hanging vines, and marble statues. She loitered in this pebbled path and

that, forgetful of her errand. Even had her mind been filled with the importance of it, she did not know where to go to find the proper entrance.

A hand grasped her rudely by the arm.

"What are you doing here?" thundered the head gardener. "Be off with you! Don't you know that no one is allowed in here without a permit?"

Gretchen wrenched free her arm. She was angry.

"How dare you touch me like that?"

Something in her glance, which was singularly arrogant, cooled even the warm-blooded Hermann Breunner.

"But you live in Dreiberg and ought to know."

"You could have told me without bruising my arm," defiantly.

"I am sorry if I hurt you, but you ought to have known better. By which sentry did you pass?" For there was that about her beauty which made him suspicious regarding the sentry's imperviousness to it.

"Hermann!"

Gretchen and the head gardener whirled. Through a hedge which divided the formal gardens from the tennis and archery grounds came a young woman in riding-habit. She carried a book in one hand and a riding-whip in the other.

"What is the trouble, Hermann?" she inquired. "Your voice was something high."

"Your highness, this young woman here had the impudence to walk into the gardens and stroll about as nice as you please," indignantly.

"Has she stolen any flowers or trod on any of the beds?"

"Why, no, your highness; but——"

"What is the harm, then?"

"But it is not customary, your highness. If we permitted this on the part of the people, the gardens would be ruined in a week."

"We, you and I, Hermann," said her highness, with a smile that won Gretchen on the spot, "we will overlook this first offense. Perhaps this young lady had some errand and lost her way."

"Yes, highness," replied Gretchen eagerly.

"Ah! You may go, Hermann."

"Your highness alone with—"

"Go at once," kindly, but with royal firmness.

Hermann bowed, gathered up his pruning knives and scissors which he had let fall, and stalked down the path. What was it? he wondered. She was a princess in all things save her lack of coldness toward the people. It was wrong to meet them in this way, it was not in order. Her highness had lived too long among them. She would never rid herself of the idea that the humble had hearts and minds like the exalted.

As the figure of the head gardener diminished and shortly vanished behind a bed of palms, her highness laughed brightly; and Gretchen, to her own surprise, found herself laughing also, easily and without constraint.

"Whom were you seeking?" her highness asked, rather startled by the undeniable beauty of this peasant.

"I was seeking your serene highness. I live at Number Forty the Krumerweg, and the sick woman gave me this note for you."

"Krumerweg?" Her highness reached for the note and read it, and as she read tears gathered in her eyes. "Follow me," she said. She led Gretchen to a marble bench and sat down. Gretchen remained on her feet respectfully. "What is your name?"

"Gretchen, highness."

"Well, Gretchen, sit down."

"In your presence, highness?" aghast.

"Don't bother about my presence on a morning like this. Sit down."

This was a command and Gretchen obeyed with alacrity. It would not be difficult, thought Gretchen, to love a princess like this, who was not only lovely but sensible. The two sat mutely. They were strangely alike. Their eyes nearly matched, their hair, even the shape of their faces. They were similarly molded, too; only, one was slender and graceful after the manner of fashion while the other was slender and graceful directly from the hands

of nature. The health of outdoors was visible in their fine skins and clear eyes. The marked difference lay, of course, in their hands. The princess had never toiled with her fingers except on the piano. Gretchen had plucked geese and dug vegetables with hers. They were rough, but toil had not robbed them of their natural grace.

"How was she?" her highness asked.

"About the same, highness."

"Have you wondered why she should write to me?"

"Highness, it was natural that I should," was Gretchen's frank admission.

"She took me in when nobody knew who I was, clothed and fed me, and taught me music so that some day I should not be helpless when the battle of life began. Ah," impulsively, "had I my way she would be housed in the palace, not in the lonely Krumerweg. But my father does not know that she is in Dreiberg; and we dare not tell him, for he still believes that she had something to do with my abduction." Then she stopped. She was strangely making this peasant her confidante. What a whim!

"Highness, that could not be."

"No, Gretchen; she had nothing to do with it." Her highness leveled her gaze at the flowers, but her eyes saw only the garret or the barnlike loneliness of the Opera during rehearsals.

Gretchen did not move. She saw that her highness was dreaming; and she herself had dreams.

"Do you like music?"

"Highness, I am always singing."

"La—la—la!" sang the princess capriciously.

"La—la—la!" sang Gretchen, smiling. Her voice was not purer or sweeter; it was merely stronger, having been accustomed to the open air.

"Brava!" cried the princess, dropping book and whip and folding the note inside the book. "Who taught you to sing?"

"Nobody, highness."

"What do you do?"

"I am a goose-girl; in the fall and

winter I work at odd times in the Black Eagle."

"The Black Eagle? A tavern?"

"Yes, highness."

"Tell me all about yourself."

This was easy for Gretchen; there was so little.

"Neither mother nor father. Our lives are something alike. A handsome girl like you must have a sweetheart."

Gretchen blushed. "Yes, highness. I am to be married soon. He is a vintner. I would not trade him for your king, highness," with a spicce of boldness.

Her highness did not take offense; rather she liked this frankness. In truth, she liked any one who spoke to her on equal footing; it was a taste of the old days when she herself could have chosen a vintner and married him, with none to say her nay. Now she was only a pretty bird in a gilded cage. She could fly, but whenever she did so she blundered painfully against the bright wires. If there was any envy between these two, it existed in the heart of the princess only. To be free like this, to come and go at will, to love where the heart spoke! She surrendered to another vagrant impulse.

"Gretchen, I do not think I shall marry the King of Jugendheit."

Gretchen grew red with pride. Her highness was telling her state secrets!

"You love some one else, highness?" How should a goose-girl know that such a question was indelicate?

Her highness did not blush; the color in her cheeks receded. She fondled the heart-shaped locket which she invariably wore round her throat. That this peasant girl should thus boldly put a question she herself had never dared to press!

"You must not ask questions like that, Gretchen."

"Pardon, highness; I did not think. Gretchen was disturbed.

But the princess comforted her with: "I know it. There are some questions which should not be asked even by the heart."

This was not understandable to Gretchen; but the locket pleased her

eye. Her highness, observing her interest, slipped the trinket from her neck and laid it in Gretchen's hand.

"Open it," she said. "It is a picture of my mother, whom I do not recollect having ever seen. Wait," as Gretchen turned it about helplessly. "I will open it for you." Click!

Gretchen sighed deeply. To have had a mother so fair and pretty! She hadn't an idea how her own mother had looked; indeed, being sensible and not given much to conjuring, she had rarely bothered her head about it. Still, as she gazed at this portrait, the sense of her isolation and loneliness drew down upon her, and she in her turn sought the flowers and saw them not. After a while she closed the locket and returned it.

"So you love music?" picking up the safer thread.

"Ah, yes, highness."

"Do you ever go to the Opera?"

"As often as I can afford. I am very poor."

"I will give you a ticket for the season. How can I reward you for bringing this message? Don't have any false pride. Ask for something."

"Well, then, highness, give me an order on the grand duke's head vintner for a place."

"For the man who is to become your husband?"

"Yes, highness."

"You will have it to-morrow. Now, come with me. I am going to take you to Herr Ernst. He is the director of the Opera. He rehearses in the court theater this morning."

Gretchen, undetermined whether she was waking or dreaming, followed the princess. She was serenely unafraid, to her own great wonder. Who could describe her sensations as she passed through marble halls, up marble staircases, over great rugs so soft that her step faltered? Her wooden shoes made a clatter whenever they left the rugs, but she stepped as lightly as she could. She heard music and voices presently, and the former she recognized. As her highness entered the bijou theater, the Herr Direktor stopped the music. In

the little gallery, which served as the royal box, sat several ladies and gentlemen of the court, the grand duke being among them. Her highness nodded at them brightly.

"Good morning, Herr Direktor."

"Good morning, your highness."

"I have brought you a prima donna," touching Gretchen with her whip.

The Herr Direktor showed his teeth; her highness was always playing some jest.

"What shall she sing in, your highness? We are rehearsing 'The Bohemian Girl.'"

The chorus and singers on the little stage exchanged smiles.

"I want your first violin," said her highness.

"Anton!"

A youth stood up in the orchestral pit.

"Now, your highness?" said the Herr Direktor.

"Try her voice."

And the Herr Direktor saw that she was not smiling. He bade the violinist to draw his bow over a single note.

"Imitate it, Gretchen," commanded her highness; "and don't be afraid of the Herr Direktor or of the ladies and gentlemen in the gallery."

Gretchen lifted her voice. It was sweeter and mellower than the violin.

"Again!" the Herr Direktor cried, no longer curious.

Without apparent effort Gretchen passed from one note to another, now high, now low, or strong or soft; a trill, a run. The violinist, of his own accord, began the jewel song from "Faust." Gretchen did not know the words, but she carried the melody without mishap. And then "I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls." This song she knew word for word, and ah, she sang it with strange and haunting tenderness! One by one the musicians dropped their instruments to their knees. The grand duke in the gallery leaned over the velvet-buffered railing. All realized that a great voice was being tried before them. The Herr Direktor struck his music-stand sharply. It was enough.

"Your highness has played a fine jest this day. Where does madame your guest sing, in Berlin or Vienna?"

"In neither," answered her highness, mightily gratified with Gretchen's success. "She lives in Dreieberg, and till this morning I doubt if I ever saw her before."

The Herr Direktor stared blankly from her highness to Gretchen, and back to her highness again. Then he grasped it. Here was one of those moments when the gods make gifts to mortals.

"Can you read music?" he asked.

"No, herr," said Gretchen.

"That is bad. You have a great voice, fräulein. Well, I will teach you. I will make you a great singer. It is hard work."

"I have always worked hard."

"Good! Your highness, a thousand thanks! What is your name?" to Gretchen. She told him. "It is a good name. Come to me Monday at the Opera and I will put you into good hands. Some day you will be rich, and I shall become great because I found you."

Then, with the artist's positive indifference to the presence of exalted blood, he turned his back upon the two young women and roused his men from the trance.

"So, Gretchen," said her highness, when the two came out again into the garden, "you are to be rich and famous. That will be fine."

"Thanks, highness, thanks! God grant the day to come when I may be of service to you!" Gretchen reverently kissed the hands of her benefactress.

"Whenever you wish to see the gardens," added the princess, "the gates will be open for you."

As Gretchen went back to the Kru-merweg her wooden shoes were golden slippers and her rough homespun silk. Rich! Famous! She saw the Opera ablaze with lights, she heard the roll of applause. She saw the horn of plenty pouring its largess from the fair sky. Rainbow dreams! But Gretchen never became a prima donna. There was

something different on the knees of the gods.

CHAPTER X.

The grand duke stamped back and forth with a rumble as of distant thunder. He would search the very depths of this matter. He was of a patient mold, but this was the final straw. He would have his revenge if it upset the whole continent. They would play with him, eh? Well, they had loosed the lion this time. He had sent his valet to summon her highness and Herbeck.

"And tell them to put everything else aside."

He kneaded the note in his hand powerfully. It was anonymous, but it spoke clearly like truth. It had been left with one of the sentries who declared that a small boy had delivered it. The sender remained undiscoverable.

His highness had just that hour returned from the military field. He was tired; and it was not the psychological moment for a thing like this to turn up. Had he not opposed it for months? And now, having surrendered against his better judgment, this gratuitous affront was offered him! It was damnable. He smote the offending note. He would soon find out whether it was true or not. Then he flung the thing violently to the floor. But he realized that this burst of fury would not translate the muddle, so he stooped and recovered the missive. He laughed, but the laughter had a grim Homeric sound. War! Nothing less. He was prepared for it. Twenty thousand troops were now in the valley, and there were twenty thousand reserves. What Franz Josef of Austria or William of Prussia said did not amount to the snap of his two fingers. To avenge himself of the wrongs so long endured of Jugendheit, to wipe out the score with blood! Did they think that he was in his dotage, to offer an insult of this magnitude? They should see, aye, that they should! It did not matter that the news reached him through subterranean channels or by treachery; there was truth here, and that sufficed.

"Enter!" he cried, as some one knocked on the door.

Herbeck came in, calm, imperturbable as ever.

"Your highness sent for me?"

"I did. Why the devil couldn't you have left well enough alone? Read this!" flinging the note down on his desk.

Herbeck picked it up and worked out the creases. When he had read to the final word, his hand, even as the duke's, closed spasmodically over the stiff paper.

"Well?" The query tingled with rage.

The answer on the chancellor's lips was not uttered. Hildegarde came in. She blew a kiss at her father, who caught the hand and drew her toward him. He embraced her and kissed her brow.

"What is it, father?"

Herbeck waited.

"Read," said the duke.

As the last word left Herbeck's lips, she slipped from her father's arms and looked with pity at the chancellor.

"What do you think of this, Hildegarde?"

"Why, father, I think it is the very best thing in the world," dryly.

"An insult like this?" The duke grew rigid. "You accept it calmly, in this fashion?"

"Shall I weep and tear my hair over a boy I have never seen? No, thank you. I was about to make known to you this very evening that I had reconsidered the offer. I will never marry his majesty."

"A fine time!" The duke's hand trembled. "Why, in God's name, did you not refuse when the overtures were first made? The truth, Herbeck, the whole truth; for there is something more than this."

Herbeck, in few words and without evasion, explained the situation.

"Your highness, the regent is really not to blame, for his majesty had given him free rein in the matter; and his royal highness, working as I have been for the best interests of the two countries, never dreamed that the king

would rebel. All my heart and all my mind have been working toward this end, toward a greater peace and prosperity. The king has been generous enough to leave the publicity in our hands; that is to say, he agrees to accept the humiliation of being rejected by her serene highness."

"That is very generous of him!" said the duke sarcastically. "Send for Ducwitz."

"Ducwitz, your highness?" cried the chancellor, chilled.

"Immediately!"

"Father!"

"Must I give an order twice?"

"Your highness, if you call Ducwitz I shall surrender my portfolio to you." The chancellor spoke without anger, quietly but firmly.

"Do so. There are others to take up your work." The duke, for the nonce, had thrown reason to the winds. Revenge, the clamor of revenge, was all the voice he heard.

The chancellor bowed, turned to leave the room, when Hildegarde flew to the duke's side and snatched at his sleeve.

"Father, you are mad!"

"At least I am master in Ehrenstein. Herbeck, you will have the kindness to summon General Ducwitz."

"Your highness," replied Herbeck, "I have worked long and faithfully in your service. I cannot recollect that I ever asked one personal favor. But I do so now. Do not send for Ducwitz tonight. See him in the morning. This is no time for haste. You will throw the army into Jugendheit, and there will follow a bloody war. For I have to inform you that the prince regent, recognizing the false position he is in, has taken the ram by the horns. His troops are already bivouacked on the other side of the pass. This I learned to-day. He will not strike first; he will wait for you."

"I will have my revenge!" stubbornly.

"Father, listen to me. I am the affronted person; I, I alone, have the right to say what shall be done in the matter. And I say to you if you do

these cruel things, dismiss his excellency and bring war and death to Ehrenstein, I will never forgive you, never, never! You are wrong, wrong, and I your daughter tell you so frankly. Leave it to me. There will be neither war nor humiliation."

As the duke gazed at her the wrath gathering in his throat receded and his admiration grew. His daughter! She was a princess indeed as she stood there, fearless, resolute, beautiful. And her very beauty gave recurrence to his wrath. A fool of a king he was, a fool of a king!

"My child," he said, "I have suffered too much at the hands of Jugendheit. It was my daughter the first time; it is my honor now," proudly.

"Will it balance war and devastation?" the girl asked quietly. "Is it not pride rather than honor? The prince regent made a pardonable blunder. Do not you, my father, make an unpardonable one. The king is without blame, for you appeal to his imagination as a man who deeply wronged his father. I harbor no ill-feeling against him or his uncle, because I look at the matter from an impersonal point of view; it was for the good of the state. This blunder can be undone; therefore it is not wise to double it, to make it irreparable."

"A *Portia* to the judgment!" said the chancellor, his eye kindling. "Let it all rest upon my shoulders. I alone am to blame. It was I who first suggested the alliance. We all have dreams, active or passive, futile or purposeful. My ambition was to bring about a real and lasting peace. Your highness, I have failed signally. There is nothing to do now but to appoint my successor." All the chancellor's force and immobility of countenance gave way, and he looked the broken man.

Notwithstanding that he was generally hasty, the duke was a just man. In his heart of hearts he understood. He offered his hand, with half a smile; and when he smiled he was a handsome old man.

"You are bidding me farewell, your highness?" said Herbeck.

"No, count. I would not let you go for half my duchy. What should I do without your solid common sense? No; remain; we are both of us too old to quarrel. Even a duke may be a fool sometimes."

Herbeck laid his cold hand upon the duke's. Then he went over to her highness and kissed her hand gratefully, for it was truly at her feet the wreath of victory lay.

"Highness," he said softly, "you are the fairest, finest princess of them all, and you shall marry when you will."

"And where?"

"I would that I could make it so. But there is a penalty for being placed so high. We cannot change this un-written law."

"Heaven did not write it," she replied.

"No, my daughter," said the duke. "Man is at the bottom of all the kinks and twists in this short life; not Heaven. But Herbeck is right; you shall marry *when you will*."

She sprang into his arms and kissed him. It was, however, a traitorous kiss; for she was saying in her heart that now she would never marry.

Herbeck's eye wandered to the portrait over the fireplace. It was the girl's mother.

The knock of the valet was again heard.

"Your highness, there is a young woman, a peasant, who desires to speak to her serene highness."

"Where is she?" asked the duke.

"She is outside, your highness."

"What! She enters the palace without any more trouble than this?"

"By my orders, father," said Hildegarde, who gathered that this privileged visitor must be Gretchen of the Kruemerweg. "Admit her."

"Truly we are becoming socialists," said the duke, appealing to Herbeck, who replied with his usual grim smile.

Gretchen was ushered in. Her throat was a little full as she recognized the three most important persons in the grand duchy. Outwardly she was composed. She made a curtsey to which

the duke replied with his most formal bow of state. The sparkle of amusement was in his eyes.

"The little goose-girl!" he said half-audibly.

"Yes, highness." Gretchen's face was serious and her eyes were mournful. She carried an envelope in her hand tightly.

"Come to me, Gretchen," said the princess. "What is it?"

Gretchen's eyes roamed undecidedly from the duke to Herbeck.

"She is dead, highness, and I found this letter under her pillow."

It was Herbeck's hand that took the envelope. But he did not open it at once.

"Dead?" Hildegarde's eyes filled.

"Who is dead?" demanded the duke.

"Emma Schultz, father. Oh, I know you will forgive me for this deception. She has been in Dreberg for a month, dying, and I have often stolen out to see her." She let her tears fall unrestrained.

The duke stared at the rug. Presently he said: "Let her be buried in consecrated ground. Wrong or right, that chapter is closed, my child, and I am glad you made her last moments happy. It was like you. It was like your mother. What is in the letter, Herbeck?"

Herbeck was a strong man; he was always far removed from tears; but there was a mist over the usual clarity of his vision. He ripped down the flap. It was only a simple note to her serene highness, begging her to give the enclosed bank-notes to one Gretchen who lived in the Kruemerweg. The notes represented a thousand crowns.

"Take them, little goose-girl," said the duke; "your ship has come in. This will be your dowry."

An icy shiver ran up and down Gretchen's spine, a shiver of wonder, delight, terror. A thousand crowns! A fortune!

"Hold out your hand," requested Herbeck. One by one he laid the notes on the goose-girl's hand. "This is only a just reward for being kind and gentle to the unfortunate."

"And I shall add to it another thousand," said Hildegarde. "Give them to me, father."

In all, this fortune amounted to little more than four hundred dollars; but to Gretchen, frugal and thrifty, to whom a single crown was a large sum, to her it represented wealth. She was now the richest girl in the lower town. Dreams of kaleidoscopic variety flew through her head. Little there was, however, of jewels and gowns. This vast sum would be the buffer between her and hunger while she pursued the one great ambition of her life—music. She tried to speak, to thank them, but her voice was gone. Tears sprang into her eyes. She had the power to do no more than weep.

The duke was first to relieve the awkwardness of the moment.

"Count, has it not occurred to you that we stand in the presence of two very beautiful young women?"

Herbeck scrutinized Gretchen with care; then he compared her with the princess. The duke was right. The goose-girl was not a whit the inferior of the princess. And the thing which struck him with most force was that, while each possessed a beauty individual to herself, it was not opposite but strangely alike.

The goose-girl had returned to her gloomy Krumerweg, the princess had gone to her apartments, and Herbeck to his cabinet. The duke was alone. For a long period he stood before the portrait of his wife. The beauties of his courtship trooped past him; for God had given to the Grand Duke of Ehrenstein that which He denies most of us, high or low, a perfect love.

"Always, always, dear heart," he whispered; "in this life and in the life to come. To love, what is the sickle of death?"

He passed on to his secretary and opened a drawer. He laid a small bundle on the desk and untied the string. One by one he ranged the articles; two little yellow shoes, a little cloak trimmed with ermine. There had been

a locket, but that was now worn by her highness.

CHAPTER XI.

Hermann Breunner lived in the granite lodge, just within the eastern gates of the royal gardens. He was a widower and shared the ample lodge with the undergardeners and their families. He lived with them, but signally apart. They gave him as much respect as if he had been the duke himself. He was a lonely, taciturn man, deeply concerned with his work, and a botanical student of no mean order. No comrade helped him pass away an evening in the chimney-corner, pipe in hand and good cheer in the mug. This isolation was not accidental, it was Hermann's own selection. He was a man of brooding moods, and there was no laughter in his withered heart, though the false sound of it crossed his lips at infrequent intervals.

He adjusted his heavy spectacles and held the note slantingly toward the candle. A note or a letter was a singular event in Hermann's life. Not that he looked forward with eagerness to receive them, but that there was no one existing who cared enough about him to write. This note left by the porter of the Grand Hotel moved him with surprise. It requested that he present himself at eight o'clock at the office of the hotel and ask to be directed to the room of Hans Grumbach.

"Now, who is Hans Grumbach? I never knew or heard of a man of that name."

Nevertheless he decided to go. Certainly this man Grumbach did not urge him without some definite purpose. He laid down his pipe, reached for his hat and coat—for in the lodge he generally went about in his shirt-sleeves—and went over to the hotel. The concierge, who knew Hermann, conducted him to room ten on the entresol. Hermann knocked. A voice bade him enter. Ah, it was the German-American whose partners had puzzled his excellency.

"You wished to see me, Herr Grumbach?"

"Yes," said Grumbach, offering a chair.

Hermann accepted the courtesy with dignity. His host drew up another chair to the opposite side of the reading-table. The light overhead put both faces in a semishadow.

"You are Hermann Breunner," began Grumbach.

"Yes."

"You once had a brother named Hans."

Hermann grew rigid in his chair. "I have no brother," he replied, his voice dull and empty.

"Perhaps not now," continued Grumbach, "but you did have."

Hermann's head drooped. "My God, yes, I did have a brother; but he was a scoundrel."

Grumbach lighted a cigar. He did not offer one to Hermann, who would have refused it.

"Perhaps he was a scoundrel. He is—dead!" softly.

"God's will be done!" But Hermann's face turned lighter.

"As a boy he loved you."

"And did I not love him?" said Hermann fiercely. "Did I not worship that boy, who was to me more like a son than a brother? Had not all the brothers and sisters died but he? But you—who are you to recall these things?"

"I knew your brother; I knew him well. He was not a scoundrel; only weak. He went to America and became successful in business. He fought with the North in the war. He was not a coward; he did his fighting bravely and honorably."

"Oh, no; Hans could never have been a coward; even his villainy required courage. But go on."

"He died facing the enemy, and his last words were of you. He begged your forgiveness; he implored that you forget that black moment. He was young, he said; and they offered him a thousand crowns. In a moment of despair he fell."

"Despair? Did he confess to you the crime he committed?"

"Yes."

"Did he tell you to whom he sold his honor?" tensely.

"That he never knew. A gipsy from the hills came to him, so he said."

"From *Jugendheit*?"

"I say that he knew nothing. He believed that the gipsy wanted her highness to hold for ransom. Hans spoke of a girl called Tekla."

"Tekla? Ah, yes; Hans was in love with that doll-face."

"Doll-face or not, Hans evidently loved her. She jilted him, and he did not care then what happened. His one desire was to leave Dreiberg. And this gipsy brought the means and the opportunity."

"Not *Jugendheit*?"

"Who knows? Hans followed the band of gipsies into the mountains. The real horror of his act did not come home to him till then. Ah, the remorse! But it was too late. They dressed the little one in rags. But when I ran away from them I took her little shoes and cloak and locket."

Hermann was on his feet!

Grumbach relighted his cigar which had gone out. The smoke wavered about his face and slowly ascended. His eyes were as bright and glowing as coals. He waited. He had made the slip without premeditation; but what was done was done. So he waited.

Hermann dropped his hands on the table and leaned forward.

"Is it you, Hans, and I did not know you?"

"It is I, brother."

"My God!" Hermann sank down weakly. The ceiling spun and the gas-light separated itself into a hundred flames. "You said he was dead!"

"So I am, to the world, to you, and to all who knew me," quietly.

"Why have you returned?"

Hans shrugged. "I don't know. Perhaps I am a fool; perhaps I am willing to pay the penalty of my crime. At least that was uppermost in my mind till I learned that her highness had been found."

"Hans, Hans, the duke has sworn to hang you!"

Hans laughed. "The rope is not made that will fit my neck. Will you denounce me, brother?"

"I?" Hermann shrank back in horror.

"Why not? Five thousand crowns still hang over me."

"Blood-money for me? No, Hans!"

"Besides, I have made a will. At my death you will be rich."

"Rich?"

"Yes, Hermann. I am worth two hundred thousand crowns."

Hermann breathed with effort. So many things had beaten upon his brain in the past ten minutes that he was dazed. His brother Hans alive and here, and rich?

"But riches are not everything."

"Sometimes they are little enough," Hans agreed.

"Why did you do it?" Hermann's voice was full of agony.

"Have I not told you, Hermann? There is nothing more to be added." Then, with rising passion: "Nothing more, now that my heart is blistered and scarred with regret and remorse. God knows that I have repented and repented. I went to war because I wanted to be killed. They shot me here, and here, and here, and this saber-cut would have split the skull of any other man. But it was willed that I should come back here."

"My poor brother! You must fly at once!"

"From what?" tranquilly.

"The chancellor is suspicious."

"I know that. But since you, my brother, failed to identify me, certainly his excellency will not. I shall make no slip as in your case. And you will not betray me when I tell you that I have returned principally to find out whence came those thousand crowns."

"Ah! Find that out, Hans; yes, yes!" Hermann began to look more like himself. "But what was your part?"

"Mine? I was to tell where her highness and her nurse were to be at a certain hour of the day. Nothing more was necessary. My running away was the expression of my guilt; otherwise they would never have connected me with the abduction."

"Have you any suspicions?"

"None. And remember, you must

not know me, Hermann, no matter where we meet. I am sleepy." Hans rose.

And this, thought Hermann, his bewilderment gaining life once more, and this calm, unruffled man, whose hair was whiter than his own, a veteran of the bloodiest civil war in history, this prosperous mechanic, was his little brother Hans!

"Hans, have you no other greeting?" Hermann asked, spreading out his arms.

The wanderer's face beamed; and the brothers embraced.

"You forgive me, then, Hermann?"

"Must I not, little Hans? You are all that is left me of the blood. True, I swore that if ever I saw you again I should curse you."

The two stood back from each other but with arms still entwined.

"Perhaps, Hans, I did not watch you closely enough in those days."

"And what has become of the principal cause?"

"The cause?"

"Tekla."

"Bah! She is fat and homely and the mother of seven squalling children."

"What a world! To think that Tekla should be at the bottom of all this tangle! What irony! I ruin my life, I break the heart of the grand duke, I nearly cause war between two friendly states—why? Tekla, now fat and homely and the mother of seven, would not marry me. The devil rides strange horses."

"Good night, Hans."

"Good night, Hermann, and God bless you for your forgiveness. Always come at night if you wish to see me, but do not come often; they might remark it."

A rap on the door startled them. Hans, a finger of warning on his lips, opened the door. Carmichael stood outside.

"Ah, captain!" Hans took Carmichael by the hand and drew him into the room.

Carmichael, observing Hermann, was rather confused as to what to do.

"Good evening, Hermann," he said.

"Good evening, Herr Carmichael."

Hermann passed into the hall and softly closed the door after him. It was better that the American should not see the emotion which still illuminated his face.

"What's the good word, captain?"

Carmichael put in a counter-query: "What was your brother doing here?"

"I have told him who I am."

"Was it wise?"

"Hermann sleeps soundly; he will talk neither in his sleep nor in his waking hours. He has forgiven me."

"For what?" thoughtlessly.

"The time for explanations has not yet come, captain."

"Pardon me, Grumbach; I was not thinking. But I came to bring you the invitation to the military ball."

The broad white envelope, emblazoned with the royal arms, fascinated Hans, not by its resplendency but by the possibilities it afforded.

"Thank you; it was very good of you."

"It was a pleasure, comrade. What do you say to an hour or two at the Black Eagle? We'll drown our sorrows together."

"Have you any sorrows, captain?"

"Who hasn't? Life is a patchwork with the rounding-out pieces always missing. Come along. I'm lonesome to-night."

"So am I," said Hans.

The Black Eagle was lively as usual; and there were some familiar faces. The vintner was there and so was Gretchen. Carmichael hailed her.

"This is my last night here, Herr Carmichael," she said.

"Somebody has left you a fortune?" There was a jest in Carmichael's eyes.

"Yes," replied Gretchen, her lips unsmiling. "The poor lady who lived on the top floor of my grandmother's house was rich. She left me a thousand crowns."

Carmichael and Grumbach: "A thousand crowns!"

"And what will you do with all that money?" asked Hans.

"I am going to study music."

"I thought you were going to be married soon," said Carmichael.

"Surely. But that will not hinder. I shall have enough for two." Gretchen saw no reason why she should tell them of the princess' generosity.

"But how does he take it?" asked Carmichael, with a motion of his head toward the vintner, half hidden behind a newspaper.

"He doesn't like the idea at all. But the Herr Direktor says that I am a singer, and that some day I shall be rich and famous."

"When that day comes I shall be there with many a brava!"

The vintner, who sat near enough to catch a bit of the conversation, scowled over the top of his paper. Carmichael eyed him mischievously. Gretchen took her coppers and went away.

"A beautiful girl," said Hans abstractedly. "She might be Hebe with no trouble at all."

Carmichael admired Hans. There was always some new phase in the character of this quiet and unassuming German. A plumber who was familiar with the classics was not an ordinary person. He raised his Stein and Hans extended his. After that they smoked, with a word or two occasionally in comment.

At that day there was only one newspaper in Dreiberg. It was a dry and solid sheet, of four pages, devoted to court news, sciences, and agriculture. The vintner presently smoothed down the journal, opened his knife, and cut out a paragraph. Carmichael, following his movements slyly, wondered what he had seen to interest him to the point of preservation. The vintner crushed the remains of the sheet into a ball and dropped it to the floor. Then he finished his beer, rose, and proceeded toward the stairs leading to the rathskeller below. Down these he disappeared.

An idea came to Carmichael. He called a waitress and asked her to bring a copy of that day's paper. Meantime he recovered the vintner's paper, and when he finally placed the two together, it was a simple matter to replace the missing cutting. Grumbach showed a mild interest over the procedure.

"Why do you do that, captain?"

"A little idea I have; it may not amount to anything." But the American was puzzled over the cutting. There were two sides to it; which had interested the vintner? "Do you care for another beer?"

"No, I am tired and sleepy, captain."

"All right; we'll go back to the hotel. There is nothing going on here tonight."

But Carmichael was mistaken for once.

A little time later Herr Goldberg harangued his fellow socialists bitterly. Gretchen's business in this society was to serve. They had selected her because they knew that she inclined toward the propaganda. Few spoke to her, outside of giving orders, and then kindly.

The rathskeller had several windows and doors. These led to the *bier-garten*, to the wine-cellar, and to an alley which had no opening on the street. The police had as yet never arrested anybody; but several times the police had dispersed Herr Goldberg and his disciples on account of the noise. The window which led to the blind alley was six feet from the floor, twice as broad as it was high, and unbarred. Under this window sat the vintner. He was a probationer, a novitiate; this was his second attendance. He liked to sit in the shadow and smile at Herr Goldberg's philosophy, which, summed up briefly, meant that the rich should divide with the poor and that the poor should hang on to what they had or got. It may have never occurred to Herr Goldberg that the poor were generally poor because of their incapabilities, their ignorance, and incompetence. Tonight, however, there were variety and spice in his Jeremiad.

"Brothers, shall this thing take place? Shall the daughter of Ehrenstein become *Jugendheit's* vassal? Where is the grand duke's pride we have heard so much about? Are we, then, afraid of *Jugendheit*?"

"No!" roared his auditors, banging their steins and tankards. The vintner joined the demonstration, banging his Stein as lustily as the next one.

"Have you thought what this marriage will cost us in taxes?"

"What?"

"Thousands of crowns, thousands! Do we not always pay for the luxuries of the rich? Do not their pleasures grind us so much deeper into the dirt? Yes, we are the corn they grind. And shall we submit, like the dogs in Flanders, to become beasts of burden?"

"No, no!"

"I have a plan, brothers; it will show the duke to what desperation he has driven us at last. We will mob the *Jugendheit* embassy on the day of the wedding; we will tear it apart, brick by brick, stone by stone."

"Hurrah!" cried the noisy ones. They liked talk of this order. They knew that it was only here that great things happened, the division of riches and mob-rule. Beer was cheaper by the keg.

The noise subsided. Gretchen spoke.

"Her serene highness will not marry the King of *Jugendheit*."

Every head swung round in her direction.

"What is that you say?" demanded Herr Goldberg.

Gretchen repeated her statement. It was the first time she had ever raised her voice in the councils.

"Oh, indeed!" said Goldberg, bowing with ridicule. "Since when did her serene highness make you her confidante?"

"Her serene highness told me so herself." Gretchen's eyes, which had held only mildness and good-will, now sparkled with contempt.

A roar of laughter went up, for the majority of them thought that Gretchen was indulging in a little pleasantry.

"Ho-ho! So you are on speaking-terms with her highness?" Herr Goldberg laughed.

"Is there anything strange in this fact?" she asked, keeping her tones even.

The vintner made a sign to her, but she ignored it.

"Strange?" echoed Herr Goldberg, becoming furious at having the interest in himself thus diverted. "Since when

did goose-girls and barmaids become on intimate terms with her serene highness?"

Gretchen pressed the vintner's arm to hold him in his chair.

"Does not your socialism teach that we are all equal?"

The vintner thumped with his Stein in approval, and others imitated him. Goldberg was no ordinary fool. He sidestepped defeat by an assumption of frankness.

"Tell us about it. If I have spoken harshly it is only reasonable. Tell us under what circumstance you met her highness and how she came to tell you this important news. Every one knows that this marriage is to take place."

Gretchen nodded. "Nevertheless, her highness has changed her mind." And she recounted picturesquely her adventure in the royal gardens, and all hung on her words in a kind of maze. It was all very well to shout "Down with royalty!" it was another matter to converse and shake hands with it.

"Hurrah!" shouted the vintner. "Long live her highness! Down with Jugendheit!"

There was a fine chorus.

And there was a fine tableau not down on the evening's program. A police officer and three assistants came down the stairs quietly.

"Let no one leave this room!" the officer said sternly.

The dramatic pause was succeeded by a babel of confusion. Chairs scraped, steins clattered, and the would-be liberators huddled together like so many sheep rounded up by a shepherd-dog.

"Ho, there! Stop him, you!"

It was the vintner who caused this cry; and the agility with which he scrambled through the window into the blind alley was an illustration.

"After him!" yelled the officer. "He is probably the one rare bird in the bunch."

But they searched in vain.

Gretchen stared ruefully at the blank window. Somehow this flight pained her; somehow it gave her the heart-ache to learn that her idol was afraid of such a thing as a policeman.

"Out into the street, every mother's son of you!" cried the officer angrily to the quaking socialists. "This is your last warning, Goldberg. The next time you go to prison for seditious teachings. Out with you!"

The socialists could not have emptied the cellar any quicker had there been a fire.

Gretchen alone remained. It was her duty to carry the steins up to the bar. The officer, rather thorough for his kind, studied the floor under the window. He found a cutting from a newspaper. This interested him.

"Do you know who this fellow was?" with a jerk of his head toward the window.

"He is Leopold Dietrich, a vintner, and we are soon to be married." There was a flaw in the usual sweetness of her voice.

"So? What made him run away like this, then?"

"He is new to Dreiberg. Perhaps he thought you were going to arrest every one. Oh, he has done nothing wrong; I am sure of that."

"There is one way to prove it."

"And what is that?"

"Ask him if he is not a spy from Jugendheit," roughly.

The steins clicked crisply in Gretchen's arms; one of them fell and broke at her feet.

CHAPTER XII.

Gretchen, troubled in heart and mind over the strange event of the night, walked slowly home, her head inclined, her arms swinging listlessly at her side. A spy, this man to whom she had joyously given the flower of her heart and soul? There was some mistake; there must be some mistake. She shivered; for the word spy carried with it all there was in deceit, treachery, cunning. In war time she knew that spies were necessary, that brave men took perilous hazards, without reward, without renown; but in times of peace nothing but opprobrium covered the word. A political scavenger, the man she loved? No; there was some mistake. The bit

of newspaper cutting did not worry her. Anybody might have been curious about the doings of the King of Jugendheit and his uncle the prince regent. Because the king hunted in Bavaria with the crown prince, and his uncle conferred with the King of Prussia in Berlin, it did not necessarily follow that Leopold Dietrich was a spy. Gretchen was just. She would hear his defense before she judged him.

Marking the first crook in the Kruemerweg was an ancient lamp hanging from the side of the wall. The candle in this lamp burned night and day, through winter's storms and summer's balms. The flame dimmed and glowed, a kindly reminder in the gloom. It was a shrine to the Virgin Mary; and before this Gretchen paused, offering a silent prayer that the Holy Mother preserve this dream of hers.

A footstep from behind caused her to start. The vintner took her roughly in his arms and kissed her many times.

Her heart shook within her, but she did not surrender her purpose under these caresses. She freed herself energetically and stood a little away from him, panting and star-eyed.

"Gretchen?"

She did not speak.

"What is it?"

"You ask?"

"Was it a crime, then, to jump out of the window?" He laughed.

Gretchen's face grew sterner. "Were you afraid?"

"For a moment, I have never run afoul the police. I thought perhaps we were all to be arrested."

"Well, and what then?"

"What then? Uncomfortable quarters in stone rooms. I preferred discretion to valor."

"Perhaps you did not care to have the police ask you questions?"

"What is all this about?" He pulled her toward him so that he could look into her eyes. "What is the matter? Answer!"

"Are you not a spy from Jugendheit?" thinly.

He flung aside her hand. "So! The first doubt that enters your ear finds

harbor there. A spy from Jugendheit; that is a police suggestion, and you believed it!"

"Do you deny it?" Gretchen was not cowed by his anger, which her own evenly matched.

"Yes," proudly, snatching his hat from his head and throwing it violently at her feet; "yes, I deny it. I am not a spy from any country; I have not sold the right to look any man in the eye."

"I have asked you many questions," she replied, "but you are always laughing. It is a pleasant way to avoid answering. I have given you my heart and all its secrets. Have you opened yours as frankly?"

To meet anger with logic and sense is the simplest way to overcome it. The vintner saw himself at bay. He stooped to recover his hat, not so much to regain it as to steal time to conjure up some way out.

"Gretchen, here under the Virgin I swear to you that I love you as a man loves but once in his life. If I were rich, I would gladly fling these riches to the wind for your sake. If I were a king, I'd barter my crown for a smile and a kiss. I have done no wrong; I have committed no crime. But you must have proof; so be it. We will go together to the police-bureau and settle this doubt once and for all."

"When?" Gretchen's heart was growing warm again.

"Now, to-night, while they are hunting for me."

"Forgive me!" brokenly.

"Come!"

"No, Leopold, this test is not necessary."

"I insist. This thing must be righted publicly."

"And I was thinking that the man I loved was a coward!"

"I am braver than you dream, Gretchen." And in truth he was, for he was about to set forth for the lion's den, and only amazing cleverness could extricate him. Man never enters upon the foolhardy unless it be to dazzle a woman. And the vintner's love for Gretchen was no passing thing. "Let us

hurry; it is growing late. They will be shutting off the lights before we return."

The police-bureau was far away, but the distance was nothing to these healthy young people. They progressed at a smart pace and in less than twenty minutes they arrived. It was Gretchen who drew back fearfully.

"After all, will it not be foolish?" she suggested.

"They will be searching for me," he answered. "It will be easier if I present myself. It will bear testimony that I am innocent of any wrong."

"I will go in with you," determinedly.

The police officer, or, to be more particular, the sub-chief of the bureau, received them with ill-concealed surprise.

"I have learned that you are seeking me," said the vintner, taking off his cap. His yellow curls waved about his forehead in moist profusion.

For the moment the sub-chief did not know what to say. This was out of the ordinary, conspicuously so. There was little precedent by which to act in a case like this. So in order to appear that nothing could destroy his official poise, he let the two stand before his desk while he sorted some papers.

"You are not a native of Dreiberg," he began.

"No, herr; I am from Bavaria. If you will look into your records you will find that my papers were presented two or three weeks ago."

"Let me see them."

The vintner's passports were produced. The sub-chief compared them with the corresponding number in his book. There was nothing wrong about them.

"I do not recollect seeing you here before."

"It was one of your assistants who originally went over the papers."

"What is your business?"

"I am a vintner by trade, herr."

"And are there not plenty of vineyards in Bavaria?"

"We vintners," with an easy gesture, "are of a roving disposition. I have been all along the Rhine and the Moselle. I prefer grapes to hops."

"But why Dreiberg? The best vineyards are south."

"Who can say where we shall go next? Dreiberg seemed good enough for me," with a shy glance at Gretchen.

"Why did you jump out of the window?"

"I was frightened at first, herr. I did not know that you merely dispersed meetings. I believed that we were all to be arrested. Such measures are in force in Munich."

"You accused him of being a Jugendheit spy," broke in Gretchen, who was growing impatient under these questions, which seemed to go nowhere in particular.

"You be silent," warned the sub-chief.

"I am here because of that accusation," said the vintner.

"What have you to say?"

"I deny it."

"That is easy to do. But can you prove it?"

"It is for you to prove, herr."

"Read this."

It was the cutting. The vintner read it, his brows drawn together in a puzzled frown. He turned the slip over carelessly. The sub-chief's eyes bored into him like gimlets.

"I can make nothing of this, herr. When I cut this out of the paper it was to preserve the notice on the other side." The vintner returned the cutting.

The sub-chief read aloud:

"Vintners and presses and pruners wanted for the season. Find and liberal compensation. Apply, Holtz."

Gretchen laughed joyously; the vintner grinned; the sub-chief swore under his breath.

"The devil fly away with you both!" he cried, making the best of his chagrin. "And when you marry, don't invite me to the wedding."

After they had gone, however, he called for an assistant.

"Did you see that young vintner?"

"Yes."

"Follow him, night and day. Find out where he lives and what he does; and ransack his room if possible. He is

either an innocent man or a sleek rascal. Report to me this time each night."

"And the girl?"

"Don't trouble about her. She is under the patronage of her serene highness. She's as right as a die. It's the man. He was too easy; he didn't show enough concern. An ordinary vintner would have been frightened. This fellow smiled."

"And if I find out anything suspicious?"

"Arrest him out of hand and bring him here."

Alone once more the sub-chief studied the cutting with official thoroughness. He was finally convinced, by the regularity of the line on the printed side as compared with the irregularity of the line on the advertising side, that the vintner had lied. And yet there was no proof that he had.

"This young fellow will go far," he mused, with reluctant admiration.

On reaching the street Gretchen gave rein to her laughter. What promised to be a tragedy was only a farce. The vintner laughed, too, but Momus would have criticized his laughter.

The night was not done yet; there were still some more surprises in store for the vintner. As they turned into the Krumerweg they almost ran into Carmichael. What was the American consul doing in this part of the town, so near midnight? Carmichael recognized them both. He lifted his hat, but the vintner cavalierly refused to respond.

"Herr Carmichael!" said Gretchen. "And what are you doing here this time of the night?"

"I have been on a fool's errand," urbaneley.

"And who sent you?"

"The god of fools himself, I guess. I am looking for a kind of ghost, a specter in black that leaves the palace early in the evening and returns late, whose destination has invariably been Forty Krumerweg."

The vintner started.

"My house?" cried Gretchen.

"Yours? Perhaps you can dispel this phantom?" said Carmichael.

Gretchen was silent.

"Oh! You know something. Who is she?"

"A lady who comes on a charitable errand. But now she will come no more."

"And why not?"

"The object of her visits is gone," Gretchen answered sadly.

"My luck!" exclaimed Carmichael ruefully. "I am always building houses of cards. I don't suppose I shall ever reform."

"Are you not afraid to walk about in this part of the town so late?" put in the vintner, who was impatient to be gone.

"Afraid? Of what? Thieves? Bah, my little man, I carry a sword-stick, and moreover I know how to use it tolerably well. Good night." And he swung along easily, whistling an air from "The Barber of Seville."

The insolence in Carmichael's tone set the vintner's ears a-burning, but he swallowed his wrath.

"I like him," Gretchen declared, as she stopped before her house.

"Why?" jealously.

"Because he is always like that; pleasant, never ruffled, kindly. He will make a good husband to some woman."

The vintner shrugged. He was not patient to-night.

"Who is this mysterious woman?"

"I am not free to tell you."

"Oh!"

"Leopold, what is the matter with you to-night? You act like a boy."

"Perhaps the police muddle is to blame. Besides, every time I see this man Carmichael I feel like a baited dog."

"In Heaven's name, why?"

"Nothing that I can remember. But I have asked you a question."

"And I have declined to answer it. All my secrets are yours, but this one is another's."

"Is it her highness?"

Gretchen fingered the latch suggestively.

"I am wrong, Gretchen; you are right. Kiss me!"

She liked the tone; she liked the kisses, too, though they hurt.

"Good night, my man!" she whispered.

"Good night, my woman! To-morrow night at eight!"

He turned and ran lightly and swiftly up the street. Gretchen remained standing in the doorway till she could see him no more. Why should he run like that? She raised the latch and went inside.

From the opposite doorway a mountaineer, a carter, a butcher, and a baker stepped cautiously forth.

"He heard something," said the mountaineer. "He has ears like a rat for hearing. What a pretty picture!" cynically. "All the world loves a lover—sometimes. Touching scene!"

No one replied; no one was expected to reply; more than that, no one cared to court the fury which lay thinly disguised in the mountaineer's tones.

"To-morrow night; you heard what he said. I am growing weary of this play. You will stop him on his way to yonder house. A closed carriage will be at hand. Before he enters, remember. She watches him too long when he leaves. Fool!"

The quartet stole along in the darkness, noiselessly and secretly.

The vintner had indeed heard something. He knew not what this noise was, but it was enough to set his heels to flying. A phase had developed in his character that defied analysis; suspicion, suspicion of daylight, of night, of shadows moving by walls, of footsteps behind. Only a little while ago he had walked free-hearted and careless. This growing habit of skulking was gall and wormwood. Once in his room, which was directly over the office of the American consulate, he fell into

a chair, inert and breathless. What a night! What a series of adventures!

"Only a month ago I was a boy. I am a man now, for I know what it is to suffer. Gretchen, dear Gretchen, I am a black scoundrel! But if I break your heart I shall break my own along with it. I wonder how much longer it will last. But for that vintner's notice I should have been lost."

By and by he lighted a candle. The room held a cot, a table, and two chairs. The vintner's wardrobe consisted of a small pack thrown carelessly into a corner. Out of the drawer in the table he took several papers and burned them. The ashes he cast out of the window. He knew something about police methods; they were by no means all through with him. Ah! A patch of white paper, just inside the door, caught his eye. He fetched it to the candle. What he read forced the color from his cheeks and his hands were touched with transient palsy.

"The devil! What shall I do now?" he muttered, thoroughly dismayed.

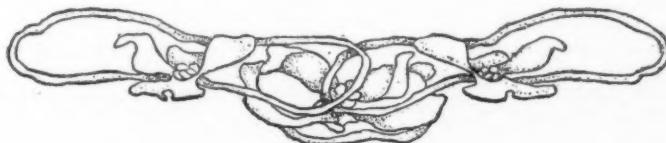
What indeed should he do? Which way should he move? How long had he been in Dreiberg? Ah, that would be rich! What a joke! It would afford him a smile in his old age. Carmichael, Carmichael! The vintner chuckled softly as he scribbled this note:

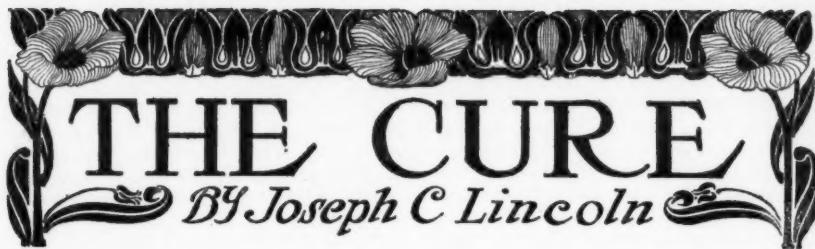
If Herr Carmichael would learn the secret of Number Forty Krumerweg, let him attire himself as a vintner and be in the Krumerweg at eight o'clock to-night.

"So there is a trap, and I am to beware of a mountaineer, a carter, a butcher, and a baker? Thanks, Scharfenstein, my friend, thanks! You are watching over me."

The vintner blew out his candle and went to bed.

TO BE CONTINUED.





THE CURE

BY Joseph C Lincoln



E B E D E E," asked Miss Caroline Badger, beaming upon her man of all work through her glasses, "do you know if there are any neurasthenics among the townspeople?"

Zeb Berry, busy in the potato-patch, leaned upon his hoe and appeared to reflect. It was a life principle of Zeb's never to admit ignorance of any subject whatsoever.

"No," he replied deliberately, "I can't say as I do, at this time of year. Have you tried up to the store?"

His mistress did not smile; she could seldom see a joke clearly enough to recognize it, even with her strongest glasses, and it is not well-bred to smile at strangers.

"Why, Zebedee!" she explained kindly. "You can't buy neurasthenics at the store."

"Oh, can't ye? Just out, but'll have some in fust of next week, I presume likely. That's what they said when I went there for brown sugar a month ago—and 'tain't come yet."

"No, Zebedee, you misunderstand me. A neurasthenic is a person who is ill—sick—suffering from nervous breakdown."

The word "breakdown" being, in Mr. Berry's mind, associated only with an accident to a wagon, or a sort of lively jig, he was at least as much puzzled after the explanation as before. But he merely looked more dignified, and nodded sagely.

"Yes, yes!" he said. "Sartin!"

"I wish to know," continued Miss

Caroline, "if there is any one in the village, particularly one of the less well-to-do class, who is sick, unable to sleep or work, generally tired and worn out. Not suffering, it may be, from any organic disease, but simply fatigued and depressed. *That* is a neurasthenic; one who, owing to a breakdown of the nervous system, is ill or imagines himself to be so. Do you know of any such in Bayport, Zebedee?"

She described the symptoms of neurasthenia with unction and a pardonable pride. Not for nothing had she read the books recommended by the Reverend Doctor Payliss, of Boston, after the lecture on "Psycho-Therapeutics," the lecture which she had heard on her recent visit to the city. That lecture and those books had made a tremendous impression on Miss Badger's mind. She believed that she had discovered her mission in life. True, she had, in the course of her thirty-nine years on this planet, made at least a dozen discoveries which, for a time, promised as well; but, with her, the latest was always the real one. To be a mental healer, a restorer of health and happiness to the sufferers from delusion and melancholia—that was to be her aim henceforward.

Zebedee did not know all this, of course. He knew, as all Bayport knew, that Caroline Badger was the niece and sole heir of the late Captain Abner Badger, who had money and owned the big house on the hill near the herring-brook. He knew that, previous to her coming into the inheritance, she had been a school-teacher in a little New Hampshire village. He knew, and all Bayport knew, that she was immensely

interested in church affairs, charitable work, the library, and every village improvement. But of her search for a "mission" neither he nor the community gossips knew anything. She had lived in Bayport less than six months. Zebedee had worked on the Badger place during Captain Abner's last years, and Miss Caroline had accepted him as part of the inheritance.

He removed one hand from the hoe-handle and stroked his chin.

"Humph!" he grunted. "Somebody that's too tired to work and imagines himself to be sick, hey? Well, I know one critter that likes to have other folks imagine he's sick, that's Lote Tripp. But, if you ask me, I'd say—"

"Tripp? Tripp?" interrupted Miss Caroline. "Why, you must mean Mr. Zelotes Tripp, Zebedee! I saw him at the library meeting. He seemed like quite a superior person, for a nati—that is, for one who has lacked certain advantages. Is he a neurasthenic?"

"Don't know. He sets around and reads and smokes and lets Didama—that's his sister—do the work and keep things goin'. Says he's an invalid, but the doctor can't name what ails him. If to be a durned loafer is a new what's-it's-name, then Lote Tripp's it, if you ask me."

Miss Badger had not heard the last sentence. She was thinking.

"Didama," she mused. "What an odd name."

"May seem so to you," was the somewhat sharp answer. "Don't to me, 'special. Maybe I'm used to it."

"Humph! Well, I wonder—Perhaps this is the very—" She smiled delightfully. "Zebedee, what would you say if some one should cure Mr. Tripp of his illness?"

"Say 'twas a miracle," declared Zeb promptly.

"Yes, indeed! But the days of miracles are *not* passed, although scoffers do say so. You know this Diana person, do you not, Zebedee?"

Mr. Berry eyed her sharply, almost suspiciously, for an instant. Then he said:

"Yup, I know her. But her name's Didama, and she ain't no person. She's a smart, capable woman, if you ask me."

"No doubt, no doubt. And, Zebedee, could you leave the garden long enough to drive me up to the Tripps' this afternoon? Could you?"

Zeb looked at her again, in the same odd manner. Then he lifted his hoe and bent over the potato-hill.

"Um-hum," he grunted. "I don't see why I can't."

At one o'clock they started.

The Tripps lived on the upper road, a mile or so beyond the railway-station, and just at the edge of the woods. Theirs was not an imposing dwelling, being very small and in need of repair. However, there was a bed of geraniums under the parlor-window and the walk to the purely ornamental front door was bordered, more or less artistically, with whitewashed clam-shells.

Miss Caroline surveyed these attempts at decoration with approval.

"Ah!" she said condescendingly, waving a black silk glove in the direction of the geranium-bed. "I see that Mr. Tripp loves flowers. I should have expected it, from his appearance. A desire for the beautiful indicates mind, Zebedee. And even that walk, crude though it may be, indicates taste."

"Yes," grunted Mr. Berry. "I shouldn't wonder. Lote's got a taste for clams, all right, and appetite accordin'. Whoa, January!" to the horse. Then, turning to his mistress, he asked: "Goin' to get out, be you?"

Miss Badger was going to get out, and did so. She walked to the side door of the Tripp home and knocked. Zebedee, throwing the reins over the dashboard, followed her without waiting for an invitation. The door was opened by a pleasant-faced, but tired-looking woman, dressed in neat calico and with her sleeves rolled up. She stared at Miss Caroline and then at Mr. Berry. At sight of the latter she colored slightly.

"Good afternoon," said Miss Badger grandly. "Miss Tripp, I believe."

"How be you, Di?" chimed in Zeb-edee.

"Miss Tripp," continued the lady, ignoring her driver entirely, "I have called to see you and your brother. Is he in?"

"He's in, all right," observed Zeb, the unabashed. "See him peekin' under the settin'-room winder-curtain this minute. Walk in, marm. What you doin', Di—washin'?"

Didama stammered that she had been doin' a little baking, and asked her visitors to enter. They did so. The dining-room was very bare but very clean. So also was the sitting-room adjoining. In a rocking-chair in the sitting-room was a tall man, wearing a patched house-jacket, a trifle too small for him, and trousers and waistcoat which did not match. He held a book in his hand; it happened to be upside down, but this Miss Caroline did not notice. His face was that of one bearing burdens, and bearing them with patient fortitude.

"Hello, Lote!" hailed the irreverent Berry. "How you standin' your tribulations these days? Or do you take 'em settin' down? Haw! haw!"

"Zeb-e-deel!" said Miss Caroline, shocked beyond measure. Didama looked shocked, also. As for Zelotes, he merely sighed and shook his head.

"Good afternoon, Zebedee," he said, smiling weakly. "I am no better, thank you. I am glad to hear you are doin' so well. To leave off strong drink complete shows strength."

This was unexpected. Mr. Berry grew crimson to the fringe of hair on his forehead.

"Strong drink!" he repeated chokingly. "What in—"

"Zebedee," demanded his employer sternly, "were you addicted to drink?"

"No, I wa'n't!" roared the outraged one. "Never took liquor in my life—that is, no more'n was necessary. I mean—Blast you, Lote Tripp! What are you sayin' that for? I'll—"

"Zeb! Zeb!" interrupted the invalid's sister quickly. "Don't you see Lote has made a mistake? He means the other Berry—Simeon, you know.

"Twas Simeon you meant, wa'n't it, Lote?"

"Perhaps, perhaps," was the meek answer. "I understood—folks said—Ah, well, never mind. In my condition I ought to expect to make mistakes. Excuse me. Oh, dear!"

He wiped his eyes with a handkerchief, frayed but clean. Didama stroked his hair soothingly. Miss Caroline was affected; so was Zeb, but in a different way.

"Mr. Tripp," said the lady visitor, "I saw you at the library meeting. And I have heard of you since. I sympathize with you deeply. I think perhaps I may be able to help you. Do you mind telling me your symptoms, just how you feel, and so on?"

Telling people just how he felt was one of Mr. Tripp's favorite occupations. But experience had made him suspicious.

"Excuse me, marm," he said, "but are you a doctor?"

"Oh, no!" was the hasty response. "Not at all. Zebedee, please introduce me."

Thus commanded, Zeb sulkily did the honors, introducing his mistress as "Miss Badger, Cap'n Ab's niece, her I'm workin' for now." The Tripps, like every one else in Bayport, knew the Badger heiress by sight, but they bowed and expressed themselves as "proud to be acquainted."

"So you see I'm not a doctor," purred Miss Caroline. "And now will you tell me how you feel?"

Zelotes told her, told of his sufferings in detail and at length. He felt poorly all the time, didn't have any ambition to stir around, couldn't eat only just such things, was nervous and blue, and so on.

"And do you wonder?" he asked indignantly. "Here I am wastin' away and gettin' more and more feeble, and not able to work. That's the thing that hurts me worst, to realize that I can't support myself and my sister, but have to set here at home and read and think of what's goin' to happen to me, and how Didama'll get along when I'm gone. Oh, Miss Badger, if you knew

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how *that* takes a-hold of me! Poor Didama, left all alone, with nobody to provide for her! I declare it—it—"

He choked and wiped his eyes with the frayed handkerchief. His sister hastened to console him.

"Don't you worry about me, Lote, dear," she protested. "Think of yourself. And remember the doctor says there ain't nothin' fatal in your trouble, and that you'll—"

"Doctor! Don't talk to me about doctors! Haven't I tried 'em all, and what do I get? Nothin' but medicine that tastes like the Evil One—beggin' your pardon, marm—and hints that I ain't sick at all. Doctors, bah! Miss Badger, you're a kind-hearted lady, I don't doubt, but if I thought you was a doctor I'd—I don't know as I wouldn't be sorry you called."

"I don't blame you, Mr. Tripp," avowed Miss Caroline. "I don't blame you at all. The so-called science of medicine," she went on, quoting at random from the Payliss lecture, "has much to learn and more to unlearn in the treatment of certain cases. I am *not* a doctor, I'm thankful to say. I believe I know just how you are situated. You are lonely and depressed because of a lack of proper society and companionship. You have few visitors—"

"Not a one, hardly. The fish-pedler was in this mornin', but all he wanted was to collect his bill. I—"

"And only from your sister and your books—"

"Yes, marm. This one's the life of Washin'ton. Di got it for me out of the library. It's very interestin' and instruction—*instructive*, I mean, marm."

"Yes. Only from your sister and your books do you get help and cheerful uplift. Mr. Tripp, would you mind if I came to see you occasionally?"

Zelotes hesitated. Before giving assent to a proposition he liked to be sure of his ground. Once he had welcomed a sympathetic stranger from out of town, only to find that he was a sewing-machine agent who, unacquainted with the family, desired to sell Didama a light-running machine. And the contract had been signed before he could

stop it. Sewing-machines and such he considered superfluous luxuries, inasmuch as they cost money which might be expended for his personal comfort.

"Why—er—why, marm," he stammered, "I don't see exactly why you want to call on a poor sick critter like me, and—"

"I shall bring you some jellies occasionally, and books—cheerful books—from time to time. And perhaps some wines and—"

"Thank you, marm; thank you. Of course I'll be mighty glad to see you, not on account of what you bring, but because I do need society of folks that understand me."

"That's it, exactly. Thank you so much. I will come again to-morrow. And meanwhile you must promise to be cheerful and think that you are feeling better already. That's a part of the bargain. You *must* promise me that."

"All right, marm. I'll try my best. Thank you kindly."

Didama saw the callers to the door. There Miss Caroline whispered eagerly for a few moments, and departed. As the buggy moved out of the yard the invalid called to his sister.

"Di!" he shouted. "Di! Come here! Why don't you come when I call you? What did that woman say?"

Didama was much excited. "Oh, Lote!" she exclaimed. "She said the nicest things about you. She said she considered you a most superior man and a misunderstood one. She said she didn't believe there was another person in Bayport who read books like that Washin'ton one. She's awful interested in you."

"Humph! What did you say? Didn't I hear you talkin' to that darned Zeb Berry?"

Didama looked guilty. "Why, Lote," she protested, "I hardly said a word to him. He just asked how I was getting along and—er—"

"Well? Well?"

"Well, he said he believed hard work must agree with me 'cause I looked younger every time he saw me. Course

he didn't mean nothin' by that, only that—”

Mr. Tripp bounced in the rocker. “And you let him stand there and sling compliments, didn't you? Him that pokes fun at your poor dyin' brother! Where's my shotgun? I ain't goin' to stand this no longer. Better blow my head off and be out of your way. No use my lingerin' around and bein' a burden—”

There was more of this, a good deal more. It ended in tears on Didama's part and grudging forgiveness on that of Zelotes. Miss Tripp promised not to be so friendly with Zebedee again.

“And, oh, Lote,” she cried, at last, “that Badger woman said somethin' else about you—somethin' that makes me almost jealous.”

“Jealous nothin'! Don't be more of a fool than you can help. What was it?”

“She said that you was undoubtedly a brainy, superior man, and that you looked it, too. She thinks you almost handsome. There!”

“Humph!” Mr. Tripp seemed to ponder. “Humph! That's likely, ain't it? Me, with patched pants and no clothes fit to be seen in.”

“Now, Lote, you know I'm goin' to buy you some more soon's ever I can.”

“Yes. Well, maybe I'll get 'em time enough to be laid out in 'em. There! Your pie's burnin'! Go see to it, why don't you? Think we want burned vittles?”

Didama rushed to the rescue of the pie. Zelotes sat silent in the rocker and continued to ponder.

“Say, Di!” he called a few minutes later. “That old maid's rich, ain't she?”

“Oh, yes, awful!”

Another pause. Then: “What do you think she's comin' to see me for?”

“I don't know, Lote. I'm sure I don't. I guess what she saw of you at the library meetin' made her like you.”

“Humph!” grunted Zelotes. He sat thinking for a while longer. Then he tossed the “Life of Washington” on

the center-table, took a tattered paper novel from beneath the chair-cushion where he had hastily hidden it, and resumed his reading.

II.

And this was the beginning of the great cure, the cure the progress and completion of which furnished Bayport with a new subject for surmise and gossip and a sensation for which it was duly grateful. The Badger buggy, piloted by Zeb, drove into the Tripp yard almost every afternoon, except Sundays, for the next month. From the vehicle alighted Miss Caroline, bearing gifts, books for the invalid's perusal, flowers for the china vase on the sitting-room table; jellies, cakes, and wines to tempt the delicate appetite of Zelotes.

Then, while the sufferer dallied daintily with the viands, groaning over every mouthful, but leaving very little in the dishes when the dalliance was finished, Miss Badger read aloud from the books. They were cheerful volumes, full of helpful counsel and optimism, and Miss Caroline's conversation was cheerful and optimistic likewise.

“There!” she would say, when the reading was concluded. “That was nice, wasn't it? You feel very much better than you did, don't you, Mr. Tripp?”

“Why, yes, marm,” Zelotes would answer doubtfully. “I don't know but I do. Yes, I guess I do, thanks to you, Miss Badger.”

“Oh, you mustn't thank me, Mr. Tripp. It's been a great pleasure, really. Now I have a new motto for you to remember and repeat. Let me see; last night you were to say to yourself: 'I am *much* stronger. I am nearly well. I am well.' Repeat it for me now, please; there's a good soul.”

“I am strong,” began Lote. “I am gettin' along middlin' well. I am—”

“Not *quite* right. Listen: 'I am *much* stronger.' Accent the 'much.' 'I am—etc.'”

The sleep-producing qualities of

these mottos were demonstrated by the fact that the patient often dropped into slumber during the afternoon rehearsal of them. This Miss Caroline accepted as a proof of their efficiency.

"I'm sure my visits are helping him, aren't you, Zebedee?" she asked of her driver on the way home.

"Sure and sartin!" was the decided affirmation. "He's gained all of ten pound since you commenced loadin' all that jelly and truck under his hatches."

"It isn't the jelly, Zebedee. It's the spiritual uplift. And thank you for so kindly detaining Didama in the kitchen while the treatment is being administered. Her antagonistic habit of mind—and I'm sure, from her attitude toward me, that her mind is antagonistic—might counteract all my labors. She understands what I'm trying to do, doesn't she?"

"Um-hum. Cal'late so; much as anybody, I guess."

"And you nor she have told no one, have you? I suppose the townspeople ask a great many questions?"

"Questions? Land of love! I should think they did!"

"Yes. Well, you mustn't tell them. There are many scoffers here in Bayport, and I wish to surprise and confound them. When the cure is complete *then* I shall announce it, and not before, Zebedee. Meantime you must prevent the sister's interfering. You will, won't you?"

"Sure pop! I'll tend to Di, all right."

"Thank you, Zebedee, for your self-sacrifice. I wish Didama were not antagonistic, but she is."

Didama had not been enthusiastic when Miss Caroline's calls had first become a daily habit. She greeted the "healer" with suspicion and a smothered resentment. Sometimes her eyes were moist and red, almost as if she had been crying. Of late, however, she had been in better spirits and a bit more resigned.

One day during the fourth week of the treatment Mr. Tripp called his sister into the sitting-room. His appearance was, for him, resplendent. He still wore the ill-assorted and patched

garments to which he had so contemptuously referred, but they were carefully brushed, his shoes were blacked, he was clean-shaven, and in his buttonhole was a big red rose, a selection from the bouquet which Miss Caroline had brought on the previous afternoon.

Didama, a hot flatiron in her hand, came in response to the call. At sight of her brother's unwonted respectability she gasped. Her face paled, and the flatiron trembled in her grasp.

"Oh, Lote!" she exclaimed. "You're—you're not— Oh, Lote! 'Tain't goin' to be *to-day*?"

Zelotes nodded.

"Yes, 'tis," he affirmed. "Why not?"

"But—but—it's so sudden."

"Sudden nothin'! How much longer do you suppose I want to set around in this—this poorhouse?" indicating the sitting-room, with a disgusted wave of his hand. "Yes, sir, 'twill be to-day. And the rest of it'll be just as soon as I can make it, too."

"But Lote, I—"

"What's the matter with you? A body'd think you'd be glad to see your poor sick brother all provided for."

"But you ain't sick no more. You told me only yesterday that you felt good as ever you did."

"What diff'rence does that make? And what are you snivelin' about? You'll be took care of, won't you?"

"Yes, I s'pose so, if I want to be."

"Want to be? Ain't you wanted to be for the last ten year, and just this way, too? Honest now, down in your heart, ain't you?"

Didama blushed and twisted her apron with the hand not encumbered by the flatiron.

"Ain't you?" repeated Zelotes.

"Why, I—don't know—but I have. I always thought a sight of—and he's real good. But—"

"Well, then?"

"But I'm thinkin' about you, Lote. 'Twon't seem natural not to have you round to take care of. And suppose— Lote, are you *sure* it'll be all right?"

"All right! Why not? Ain't I handsome and superior, and land knows

what else? And ain't you and I agreed 'twas the only sane reason for— Oh, you make me tired! Now, you settle your end of it this afternoon, and I'll tend to mine. Go and get on your best duds and look your finest. And, see here, Di! Don't you be nosin' around and interferin' in this room. Stay in the kitchen, or, better still, get out of the house, if you can. You hear? Now trot and change your clothes."

Reluctantly, and with a curious mixture of sadness and content, Didama turned to go.

"Well, Lote," she sighed, "then I s'pose you want me to settle it this afternoon."

"Ain't I been sayin' so? Settle it and carry it through, and the sooner the better. And say, Di—er—you be a good girl, and I won't forget you. Maybe I'll take you to ride sometimes, or somethin'."

Miss Caroline, beaming and joyful with the certainty of triumphant success in her first attempt at healing, entered the sitting-room an hour later. Zelotes rose from the rocker to receive her, rose vigorously, as an ex-invalid should.

"Oh, Mr. Tripp!" cried the physician enthusiastically. "How well you look!"

Mr. Tripp bowed. "I am well," he assented. "I never felt better in my life, thanks to you."

Miss Badger darted to the door. "Oh, Zebedee!" she cried. "And Didama! Come here quick! Look! Look!"

Zeb and Didama emerged from the kitchen, both somewhat embarrassed.

"Look!" gushed Miss Caroline, pointing to the convalescent. "See! Mr. Tripp says he is *cured!*"

Didama was silent. Zeb grunted. "Humph!" he observed. "Want to know! Feelin' all right and hearty, hey, Lote?"

"Yes, sir," was the dignified answer.

"Good enough! Feel's if you could do an honest day's work, hey?"

"Yes; and a good many days, if 'twas necessary. Thanks to this lady."

"Glad of it, I'm sure. Er—Miss Caroline, I thought maybe you'd let me

and Di take the horse and buggy for a little spell while you was here with Lote. Di ain't been to ride for quite a spell, and we won't be gone long, marm."

Miss Caroline hesitated, but she was too happy in her "cure" to be disobliging.

"I am willing," she said. "Don't be gone long, that's all. Not more than half an hour."

"Sartin sure I won't. Come on, Di."

"Shall I go, Lote?" asked Didama earnestly.

"Go? 'Course you'll go!" He nodded emphatically over Miss Badger's thin shoulder.

Zeb led the way to the kitchen. A few moments later the buggy creaked out of the yard.

"And now," said Miss Caroline, picking up the cheerful book of the week and opening it at the page with its corner turned down, "now we will have our reading."

"But I want to talk to you a little first," pleaded Zelotes.

"Yes? About—er—what?"

"About? Well, about me, you know, and what I mean to do and—"

"Oh, yes! About your future? I shall be glad to discuss that, Mr. Tripp. But first we must have our reading. Now please listen; this is *very* important."

She began to read. Zelotes, stifling his impatience, prepared to listen. It was a longer reading than usual, because Miss Caroline had set her heart upon finishing the book that afternoon.

Zebadee kept his promises, as a general thing, but his drive with Didama caused him to break the latest one. The half-hour had been doubled when he urged the ancient Badger horse between the Tripp gate-posts.

"Now it's all right, Didama," he whispered earnestly to his companion on the buggy-seat. "It's all right, so don't you fret."

"But I sha'n't know how to face 'em, Zeb," faltered the lady nervously. "What shall we say?"

"Say? Say I made you. Heaven alive! What's that?"

From the sitting-room window sounded voices, Miss Caroline's in alarmed and agitated expostulation, Zelotes' in angry command. Then Miss Badger screamed.

"Thunder mighty!" shouted Mr. Berry, pulling the horse back into the shafts. "Whoa, you! Don't be scart, Di! I'm a-comin', Miss Caroline!"

He leaped over the wheel and rushed toward the door. Before he reached it it burst open, and Miss Badger appeared, looking wild. Behind her, in the doorway, stood Mr. Tripp, incredulity, astonishment, and rage expressed in his face and attitude.

"What's the matter?" demanded Zeb anxiously. "There! There! Miss Caroline, stand still! It's all right. What's frightened you?"

The Badger dignity had entirely disappeared, likewise the Badger poise and self-command.

"Oh, Zeb!" panted Miss Caroline, on the verge of hysterics. "Oh, Zeb! I'm so glad you came! That dreadful man, he—"

She broke down and sobbed on her rescuer's shoulder. Didama scrambled, unassisted, from the buggy. Zeb turned to the figure in the doorway.

"Here! What's all this?" he shouted fiercely. "Lote Tripp, what in blazes have you been up to? Answer me, or I'll break you in two."

The wrathful Zelotes was ready to answer him.

"None of your business, Zeb Berry!" he choked. "You keep out of this, do you hear? Caroline Badger, are you crazy? I ain't done nothin' to you. I only said what you've been expectin' for a fortin', I cal'late. I—"

"Here! What is this, anyway?" ordered Zeb. "What did he say, marm?"

"He—he—" sobbed the lady on his shoulder. "He—he— Oh, I'm so frightened and ashamed! He had the impudence to ask me to—to—"

"I asked you to name the day, that's all, didn't I?" broke in Mr. Tripp. "What's the matter with that? You're an old maid, ain't you? You ain't got any other husband, have you? You're sweet on me, ain't you? Then what

makes you act so when I speak up like a man and ask you to marry me? Hey?"

Miss Caroline raised her head. "How dare you?" she cried. "Sweet on you? Horrors! How *dare* you hint at such a thing? I never dreamed—"

"Dreamed? Hint? I ain't hintin', I'm askin'. If you ain't sweet on me, then you're the only one in this town that knows it. What you been comin' to see me every day for? And fetchin' me flowers and presents? And settin' alongside of me, readin' and talkin' slush? And tellin' Di how superior and handsome I am? Aw, come, Caroline," he pleaded, changing his tone as the absolute certainty that he was right came again uppermost in his mind, "Aw, Caroline, *don't* act so! Bashfulness is all right—I suppose it's to be expected—but there ain't any use of carryin' it out so far. Why, Di and I— Say, is it about Di you're worried? *She's* all right. Zeb'll look out for her. He and she've been sweet on each other for years and years. She'd have married him long ago, only she couldn't leave me when I was sick. And now I'm cured, and I've given her my consent. Caroline, let's—"

Miss Badger interrupted him. "Zebedee," she said, between tightened lips, "you may drive me home at once. I've given this—oh!—this *creature* my time and thought and money to cure him when he was sick, and he has had the effrontery to *dare* to— Oh, I never was so insulted in my life! I hate and loathe him! There!"

Didama spoke for the first time since her descent from the buggy.

"Oh, Lote!" she cried. "I'm afraid there's been some mistake, ain't you?"

Her brother turned his disappointed fury in her direction.

"Mistake!" he mocked. "You're a nice one to talk about mistakes. What are you standin' by that feller for, that good-for-nothin' Berry loafer? Go into that kitchen this minute!"

But the "Berry loafer" interfered. "Wait a minute, Lote!" he said calmly. "You may have been mistook in *one* idee, but you was dead right in an-

other. Di and me have been sweet on each other for a long spell, and only for you and your everlastin' 'sickness,' she'd have said yes. Now, thanks to your bein' 'cured' and 'passin'' her your 'consent' on a clean plate, she *has* said it. More'n that, her and me have just drove around to the minister's and been married. She's Mrs. Zebedee Berry, that's who she is now."

He turned to the bride and added:

"Didama Berry, you remember what you promised the parson half an hour ago. 'Twas to *obey* your husband. All right, then you can begin now. You can go into the kitchen—not 'cause Lote tells you to, but because I do—and you can go up-stairs, too. And you can stay long enough to pack your things, and *no longer*. Miss Caroline, I'll drive you home, and then I'll come back for Di. You've been wantin' to hire a good housekeeper. There ain't no better than what she is."

Didama hesitated, glanced fearfully at her brother, then at her husband, wiped her eyes, and went into the kitchen. On the threshold she paused to say a final word.

"Oh, Lote!" she said reproachfully. "You know you told me the sooner Zeb and me settled it the better."

Zelotes watched her departure. His

anger and surprise were fast turning to alarm.

"I—I say, Zeb!" he faltered. "She can't go and leave me. I ain't well. She *can't*! What'll I do if she does?"

Mr. Berry smiled. "Well, Lote," he replied blandly. "I don't know exactly. Of course, you've forgot one thing; you *are* well; you're cured. We all heard you say so. And, bein' well, and able to do an honest day's work, I wouldn't wonder if you had to do it. Ya—as, Lote, if you ask *me*, I'll say that, fur's I can see, whatever livin' you get you'll have to work for."

Didama is housekeeper at the Badger homestead now. Zeb is hired man, as always. Miss Caroline is abroad. She has dropped psycho-therapeutics, and is preparing for her new mission in life; namely, the cultivation among rural Americans of a taste for the beautiful in art. Zelotes is actually working—that is to say, he is night-watchman in the Bayport bank and sleeps under the counter. The bank people give him, beside the lodgings under the counter, a limited supply of food and clothes. He has been guyed so unmercifully by Bayporters about his "cure," that he never speaks of being an invalid. So perhaps we may call it a cure, after all.



O MINSTREL MAY

ONCE more you come, O Minstrel May,
Playing anew your roundelay,
While buds are gaily caroling
The first love-lyrics of the Spring,
Singing to greet you on your way.

Musician of the Green Highway!
The robin, nightingale and jay,
Your changing melodies do sing,
O Minstrel May!

Blossoming branch and bushes sway
With chirping choirs in full play;
And every songster on the wing
Doth new and sweeter music bring,
O Minstrel May!

TORRANCE BENJAMIN.



A FAMILY TANGLE

D^r Leonard Merrick

CHAPTER I.

THE November sunshine had faded, twilight was saddening the streets. In the immensity of London there wasn't a neck on which she could cry and be comforted; in the vast loneliness of the Babel, there wasn't a voice to say to her: "Cheer up!"

It was the eighth day since she had crept down the stairs of an editor's office—discharged. To-day, and each day during the week, she had toiled up the stairs of editors' offices, asking vainly for employment.

As she plodded along the Strand, the girl's thoughts were of a boarding-house bill that she had been unable to pay, of the abuse that had been flung at her in the morning when she stammered her confession. She was wondering where she would find a meal on the morrow, and where she would find a bed that night.

Then her mind turned to the salary that had been lost, the rejected fashion article that hadn't "come up to the paper's standard." She recalled the ordeals suffered that she might achieve the crumpled pages—the shamed-faced intrusions on leading milliners and modistes, the halting requests to be informed. Fashion writers of position, on important journals, found the task easy, she knew; they received courtesy when they called, and an amazing discount when they bought anything; but a beginner, on a struggling journal, often received nothing but slights. A

gentlewoman had been a suppliant to people of inferior breeding; and the people of inferior breeding, whom other gentlewomen oppressed hourly, had welcomed opportunities to assert their independence.

Her humiliation when they were rude to her, the exhaustion of body and soul, as she trudged from Marguerite's to Madame Hélène's, and from Clifford's to Lacy and Lovell's; the laborious evenings at the toilet-table in the boarding-house attic, while she strove to hammer the information thin enough for it to spread over a column; what use had it all been? She was discharged!

She had youth, and hitherto she had had courage. This evening the courage seemed to have been trodden out of her. She felt helpless, hopeless, old.

The lamps began to glare above the moving multitude. She loitered on the shelter in Wellington Street, hindered by the traffic. Among the group a strange man's glance met her own, and deepened to a stare. He spoke. And, startled, she answered him.

"You look in awful trouble?"

"Do I?"

"Can I be of any use?"

"No, thank you."

The long line of vans and drays moved forward sluggishly. The man and she stood together waiting. After a moment's hesitation, he asked:

"I hope I haven't offended you by speaking?"

"I think you meant it kindly."

"I meant it rather decently. Well"—he turned away—"that's all, then!"

A constable raised his hand, and she passed with the scattering crowd across

the road. Already she told herself that she had been a fool. A miracle had happened—and she had thrust the professed help aside! Refusal had been instinctive, acceptance appeared impossible. But presently? When the streets grew desolate, and her limbs grew wearier? Oh, she had been insane!

She trembled, and went back, her frightened eyes scanning the stream of faces avidly. In the flare of a hosier's doorway she caught sight of him.

"I've changed my mind!" she panted. "If you meant it, will you lend me a pound?"

"Eh?" he said. "What?" He smiled. "Yes. Let's get out of the way." He jerked a sovereign-purse from his pocket. "There you are!"

"Where am I to send it back?"

"Oh, don't bother about that!"

"I don't expect you to believe me," she said ungraciously, "but I mean to pay it back. Heaven knows when, but I shall pay it back."

"I beg your pardon; I wasn't doubting you. Oh, you can send it to—Well, if you want it, here's my card."

"Thank you. I am immensely grateful to you."

They stood facing each other outside the hosier's window. The man was young, perhaps seven or eight and twenty, sprightly, well-dressed. There was about him the good-humored air of one to whom life has always been a fairly amusing game.

"Do you want me to go now?" he asked.

"It would be considerate of you."

"Why?"

"A girl feels ashamed the first time she accepts charity."

"Oh, but a loan isn't 'charity'!"

"Do you really believe it to be a loan?"

"Upon my word"—he smiled again—"I believe I'm likelier to see it back than most of the money I've lent! And, look here, you know, don't put yourself out to send it—any time will do. Would it be impertinent to ask a question?"

"I suppose I've lost the right to resent it."

"Don't talk like that. If you're keen

on getting rid of me, say so. But I'm rather decent, and when I saw you just now your face gave me jumps—you looked so frightfully wretched. Won't you walk on a little way?"

"If you like," she assented.

"Buck up!" said the young man cheerfully. "It'll all dry straight. What are you going to do now?"

"I'm going to Notting Hill."

"Is that where you live?"

"I'm not living anywhere. It's where I lived till this morning. This morning I was turned out, because I couldn't pay the bill. I'm going to pay it now."

"I should let it wait till I was better off if I were you."

"I should," she said, "only the woman has kept my luggage. I can't very well get another room without it."

"I say! Do you mean, if you hadn't met me, you had nowhere at all to go to-night?"

"I believe there are places where the great unwashed repose for fourpence; personally I should have preferred a tolerably clean bench, though I had sevenpence-halfpenny. That was my capital before I begged of you."

"Oh, look here, don't!" he exclaimed. "But—but I'm awfully sorry, you know, it's awfully rough! How—er—why— Don't let me be a nuisance, but you interest me."

"I was a journalist last," replied the girl, in a hard, monotonous voice. "I don't want to tell you my name, but I'm going to, because I owe it to you. My name's Irene Thorpe. I wasn't a journalist long; I used to be on the stage. I gave that up. Or it gave me up. But I always wrote. I went to an editor about a month ago with some stories. He said they were no good, but—I suppose he rather took to me—he offered me other work to do, fashion articles. The fashion articles weren't any good, either, so I was sacked. That was last week, and I haven't been able to find anything else."

"Have you parents anywhere?"

"No, my mother's dead. Well, they're both dead, but my father died when I was a child."

"No friends?"

"My mother was very poor."

He laughed. "That's cynical!"

"I didn't mean it for cynicism. Very poor people *don't* have friends—not the very poor of our class. Of course, I've acquaintances here and there, but there wasn't a soul I could go to for help."

"I'm glad I saw you. Well, you're going to Notting Hill to fetch your luggage, and then you're going into another boarding-house?"

"Or a lodging—lodgings are cheaper. Don't let me take you out of your way, Mr. —. I didn't read the name on the card."

"Barton," he said. "I've no idea where Notting Hill is."

"I shall get a bus at Oxford Circus. Don't you live in London?"

"I used to—it's Liverpool now; I only came up last night. Oh, I'll walk to your bus with you, if I may; I've nothing to do till after nine, excepting to get some dinner. Then I've a train to catch."

"Are you going back to Liverpool already?"

"No, not Liverpool. I'm going to Havre—for my sins. Business. By the way, I suppose you've never been in an office, have you—you don't know typewriting and shorthand?"

"I could learn," she said eagerly.

"Y-e-s, I'm afraid that wouldn't be quite the same thing. How do you mean, the stage gave you up? Couldn't you act?"

"What has that got to do with it? On the stage, it isn't a question whether one has talent, but whether one has money."

"I'm sure you're a cynic, you know," he chaffed, "that settles it!"

Her gesture was impatient. "Does it?"

"I didn't mean to annoy you. Go on, say some more smart things! So you don't expect to become a famous actress?"

"No."

"Perhaps if you tried again, the luck might turn."

"Perhaps. But it isn't quite so easy

to 'try again' as you think; one can't get work to do for the asking."

"Too many at the game, eh?"

"Just a few."

"Still it pays when one gets on; in your place, I should have another shot at it."

"How would you do it?"

"Well, I suppose I should go to one of the managers and persuade him to give me a part."

"Oh, talk about something you know!" she exclaimed petulantly.

The young man was entertained; he looked at her with evident amusement.

"Don't jump on me, pity my innocence. Going to one of the managers would be no use, I gather from your gentle hint?"

"Not much! Unless I could drive up in my motor and offer a big premium. It might be some use then. Why, premiums are asked now for tiny parts in third-rate companies 'on the road.' If a girl hasn't money, or enormous influence to-day, she might as well try to make a reputation by selling matches in the gutter as by going on the stage."

"Why are there so many girls at it, then?"

"Because, once they've set foot on it, it holds them. They haven't a ghost of a chance, but they stick—like flies on a fly-catcher. When you do get a salary, it's so small that you can't save anything. How are you to live while you're looking for another engagement? The last thing I settled for was 'The Girl Who Strangled the Judge.' I was to play lead. That means the heroine."

"Thank you."

"Oh, you know as much as that?" The smile that flashed at him was a revelation, it lit the pale, thin face to beauty. "Well, I'm taking you by 'Easy Steps for Beginners'! The leading salary was to be two pounds a week. And I was obliged to buy a different frock for each act! At the best, I should have been about thirty shillings to the good by the time we finished; but after I had bought the frocks, the man put a gilded amateur into the part and broke his contract with me."

"By Jove, though! I'd have sued him."

"Yes, I had lots of money left for lawsuits! Oh, there are some noble gentlemen in the profession, I can tell you. That one is an actor; he plays high-souled lovers of unstained honor, 'I could not love thee, dear, so well, loved I not honor more,' and romantic idiots in the front buy picture post-cards of him, and write him abject letters, that he shows round the wings."

The monotony had gone from her voice. Admiration stimulates, and she saw she was admired. They were by the Carlton Hotel, and impulsively her companion stopped.

"I say, what's your hurry to get to Notting Hill? This is my hotel—come in and dine with me."

She gazed at him, bewildered. "I don't think so, thanks," she stammered.

"Why not? You'll have plenty of time to do everything afterward—I shall have to bolt. You know, you're tired. Look here, it isn't six o'clock; you can have a comfortable chair and lots of cushions, and take it easy. And then we'll have dinner—a glass of champagne will pick you up."

"I don't think I will, thanks all the same," she repeated.

But the way to the boarding-house was long, and the task of removal would be toilsome. Weary of the streets, she looked beyond glass doors at a gorgeous flunkey, the guardian of another world.

"But why?"

"For one thing, you spoke of finding me a place in your office—you wouldn't be keen on engaging a typist who had been out to dinner with you."

"I say! That's smart! Rough on me, though; I wish I had never referred to the office. And I can't find you a place in it, anyhow—you've no experience; and besides, I've got a typist. She's unattractive, but competent."

She sighed.

"I'm all alone and I had the hump—I need cheering up," he pleaded.

"You've a quaint idea of cheerful society. I can't dine there like this;

by the time I had found a room and dressed it'd be too late."

"Well, come inside, you can sit down, at all events," he persisted buoyantly. "And you look very nice. Come on!"

The man was good-natured and observant, but because he had always had means he didn't divine, as they entered, how the fashionable hall appeared to the girl's unfamiliar eyes; he didn't realize that, after she had winced at the superiority of the other women's clothes, the warm, suave indolence of the scene lulled her fatigue, and fondled her—that intermittently she forgot she was hungry, and forgot she was poor, in abandoning herself on the bosom of rest.

But it did occur to him that it would be hard on her to have to go away and tramp Notting Hill for a lodgings. So after tea was brought, he said carelessly:

"How much is it you've got to pay at that place? We'll send a messenger-boy, with the money, to get your luggage. There's a room taken for you here for to-night."

And remonstrances were smiled aside. The room was booked, and she would occupy it, he declared. Of course she would be his guest, although he would be on his way to Havre.

"Life will look much better to you after breakfast in the morning. Take it from me, you're much likelier to be lucky if you start the day in good spirits. Don't spoil your dinner, but you may have one piece of toast! And give me the address—the boy's waiting."

She produced the bill, and his sovereign. "Please!" she implored, seeing he hesitated. "There's a limit even to my rapacity."

She lay back with closed eyes for an instant, as he left her. Contentment pervaded her. Her thoughts dazed; then drifted to the contents of her trunk. Her mental vision beheld complacently the frocks of which she had spoken to him—she rejoiced that the evening-gown was from Paris. Who would suspect that she had bought it for a few pounds, scarcely worn, at the

top of a dingy staircase in Bloomsbury, where professionals secured such bargains sometimes? How fortunate that she hadn't chosen the thing with the sequin bodice, which wouldn't have borne a close inspection! Her air was triumphant when he rejoined her.

And Charlie Barton was well pleased, too. Seldom had a good-natured action been rewarded with such pleasant results. The day had hung heavy on his hands, after an interview in the city. Although he had contrived formerly to mingle business and pleasure when the affairs of the firm took him from home—his father was David Barton, of Wheeler and Barton, the shipping people—he had not relished the trips since his marriage. He had married a daughter of Richard Teesdale, the woolen manufacturer, two years before, and if by this time he was often dull in her handsome presence, he was always duller when he was away from her.

Yes, he found the hour unexpectedly exhilarating, and when the luggage had arrived and the girl went up-stairs to dress, he knew no regret that the only vacant room in the hotel had been expensive.

It was up-stairs that he had his first chance to approve her toilet. She had made it in luxurious leisure, surveying her reflection in the high mirrors, lolling on the couch, scenting a bouquet of carnations that bore the name of a foreign countess, who evidently hadn't come; but she quitted the room a moment before he left his own, and his brows climbed as he greeted her. Was this victorious figure of *frou-frou* and *fashion* the pitiful creature who had begged of him in the Strand?

"Shall I pass?" she faltered, affecting humility.

"Great Scott!" he said. And then they both laughed—she couldn't pretend to distrust herself after his tone.

They went toward the elevator together gaily. And as they were going gaily toward it the young man's heart gave a thud, and slowly and heavily sank. For, at the end of the corridor, regarding them with astonished eyes, stood Mrs. Hollingsworth, his aunt,

with her husband and a bedizened widow of the name of Mrs. Bob Lee. He realized suddenly that the situation in which they found him, despite its innocence, was damning.

"Look here," he said, and it was a strange man's voice that said it. "I know those people! You must back me up."

She started painfully. Though she did not understand the full position, she understood him to intimate that she was compromising him. Her indignant glance swept his face.

"What do you mean?"

"I'm married. Smile, for God's sake—they're watching us!"

There was no time for conference. His skin was damp as they drew nearer.

"Hello, Aunt Julia!" he said, with creditable warmth. "What are *you* doing here? Mrs. Lee, how are *you*?"

"Charlie, I had no idea you were in London!" His aunt's demeanor was an interrogation-point. The glittering widow bowed guardedly.

"I came up yesterday. I'm off to Havre. Let me—a sister-in-law of mine, my aunt, Mrs. Hollingsworth. Miss Teesdale, Mrs. Lee."

It was the only explanation that occurred to his distress; his wife had four unmarried sisters, and neither woman knew them.

Instantly the frost dissolved. His aunt declared she was "delighted"; a chronic compassion for herself, absorbing and misplaced, prevented her looking so. "How do you do, Miss Teesdale?" Her melancholy gaze reverted to her nephew. "It's quite a coincidence! We're dining with Mrs. Lee; we met her at a matinée—the first time we've met for ages! Of course, now we've left Bloomsbury, I'm buried, but your uncle's so fond of a garden. It's not once in a blue moon that we go to a theater up west now, your uncle's so selfish. I'm sure to dine out is quite a treat!" Her voice was a moan. "I was just saying I don't know how Mrs. Lee will ever be able to stand the worries of housekeeping again, after living in an hotel! That's a worry *you*

don't know anything about yet, Miss Teesdale, eh?"

The girl smiled with stiff lips.

"Fanny's worries are ahead," put in Barton, uneasily facetious. As well say she was Fanny as any other of them!

"How's Alice? We never hear from her. One might be dead for any news one gets!"

"Is your wife with you, Mr. Barton?"

"She's pretty well," he said, "thanks. No, Mrs. Lee, she's in Liverpool. This child came to town to-day to stay with friends, and they've just got illness in the house. So I've fixed her here for to-night; she goes back in the morning."

"Oh, how trying! Such a long journey for nothing! From Liverpool, you said?"

"Yes, it's rather a bore for her. I'm sorry I've got to run away and leave her alone, but it can't be helped."

"You must come and talk to us when Mr. Barton has gone, Miss Teesdale," said the widow graciously. "Are you dining here? Won't you both join our table?"

"It's awfully kind of you, but we've a table already," demurred Barton, perspiring.

"Oh, let us all dine together," she insisted. "Do! That'll be jolly."

To Barton the arrangement promised to be the reverse of jolly, but it was unavoidable. Only for an instant could he speak privately to the girl before the party went into the restaurant, and she frowned at him furiously.

"Don't lose your head," he entreated. "And mind you call me 'Charlie'!"

CHAPTER II.

But furiously as she had frowned, she was beginning to question whether she had the right to be so resentful, after all. What was she resenting? His being married? He hadn't tried to make love to her. The embarrassment into which his lie had plunged her? In the circumstances, he had been forced to lie, she supposed. Still, whether he was to blame or not, the

contretemps had ruined her pleasure, and she sat pale and wretched. Barton, watching her anxiously, was sincerely glad when he saw her sip some champagne.

Meanwhile his uncle was laying himself out to be agreeable to "Miss Teesdale," whose father must be worth half a million if he was worth a penny! George Hollingsworth was a voluble, persuasive person, who for the last twenty years had floated more or less serenely on an ocean of financial difficulties. For a brief period in his youth he had held a commission in a foot regiment; to-day he was "in the City," though few knew precisely what he did in it, besides drawing directors' fees from the boards of one or two companies, with the affairs of which he was, by the way, complacently unacquainted. He had not removed from Bloomsbury because he was "so fond of a garden"; indeed, he seldom went into the garden, as his wife was well aware; he had removed because Sydenham had offered him an opportunity to make considerable display at the same rate of expenditure, and he lived in perpetual hopes of securing invitations to join other boards. It was understood that he was "highly connected," and though his connections did not appear, his conversation was sprinkled with such familiar references to the "service" and the peerage, that people like Mrs. Bob Lee nearly felt that they were circulating in society themselves when he drank their wine.

"How's your sister's eye?" he said, suddenly fixing the girl, during a lull.

"I beg your pardon?" she faltered.

"How's your sister's eye? Better?"

"Yes," she said, "thanks; it's better, but not well yet."

"Has your wife trouble with her eyes, Mr. Barton?" asked Mrs. Lee.

"The baby put his finger in one and scratched it some time ago," he explained. "The pain passed off soon and she didn't think any more about it. But it keeps coming back."

"Oh, what a nuisance! Does it affect the sight at all?"

"No. Luckily, it was just the cor-

ner of the eye. But it's depressing, it worries her."

"Oh, it would, anything the matter with the eye."

"That sort of thing takes a long time to get right," observed Mr. Hollingsworth. "The same thing happened to Reggie Cresswell—an immense pal of mine, in the Blues. Very handsome chap, people used to think it was going to be a match between him and Lady Alfriston; she told Mrs. Nye Paget, after the old earl's death, that Reggie was the only man she had ever cared for. Pots of stuff, too, she had! And Reggie had married a daughter of 'Fluke' Brabazon's—'Fatty' Fitz-James' nephew—and hadn't a tossing coin. He grazed his eye, putting his head through his shirt in a hurry one morning. The poor fellow felt the effects of it all his life. And whenever the sun came out he had to wear smoked glasses; I used to tell him he should never leave London!"

"Now I won't hear a word against London!" cried Mrs. Lee. "I think the London climate's shamefully abused. Don't *you* love London, Miss Teesdale? I say it's the only place to live in."

"Fanny doesn't get to London very often," said Barton.

"Nor Alice, either, it seems," complained his aunt. "I'm sure one would think Liverpool was at the other end of the world, the little we see of you both. I thought she promised to come and spend a week with us some time?"

"She's looking forward to it, she's looking forward to it eagerly. I wish she had been in London to-day, to look after her homeless sister!"

"Yes, what do you think, George?" said Mrs. Hollingsworth in her plaintive key. "Miss Teesdale came up to stay with some people, and found they had fever in the house."

"What?"

"Oh, she didn't go inside, she's not catching!" said Barton.

"If Charlie hadn't been here, she wouldn't have known what to do. So awkward for her! As it is, he has got to run away and leave her. By the by, perhaps you'll see your cousin in

Havre, Charlie—Ralph's coming over from Paris the day after to-morrow."

"Is that so? Via Havre?"

"Ralph will go straight on to the boat, how should they see each other?" said Mr. Hollingsworth. "But—but what an idea, not to bring Miss Teesdale to us! We'd have put her up with pleasure. My dear Miss Teesdale, why stay in an hotel? Come back with us this evening! We shall be perfectly delighted, sha'n't we, Julia?"

"Er—if Miss Teesdale would care about it, of course," sighed his wife.

"Oh, that's out of the question," said Barton promptly. "Awfully kind of you, but there's not the least necessity, really. Besides, she has had a very tiring day, and she's upset about her friends' trouble. I expect she'd like to go to bed early, wouldn't you, Fanny?"

"It's ever so good of Mr. and Mrs. Hollingsworth," said the girl, "but I do feel rather tired."

"Well, I must say I don't know what you were thinking about, my dear boy, not to bring her to us in the first instance. The natural arrangement! Julia would have rejoiced."

"But then I shouldn't have seen Miss Teesdale," chuckled the widow. "So there's a silver lining to every cloud!"

"Yes, we must look on the bright side," moaned Mrs. Hollingsworth. "Perhaps Miss Teesdale will come and stay with us another time—in the summer, when the garden's nice?"

"That would be delightful," said the girl, with composure. Her nerves were steadier now—the crisis was past and she had nothing to fear. It was as if she were playing a fashionable part on the stage, and in moments the scene amused her. Indeed, as the dinner progressed, Barton sat dismayed by her flow of small talk. She was being much more successful socially, making much more impression than was discreet; he foresaw that the real Fanny, a somewhat stolid young woman, would be the subject of undesirable inquiries for years.

To him, for whom the danger was by no means past, conversation became an increasing effort. Sooner or later his

relatives would meet his wife again, and the first allusion to Fanny would be disastrous. He supposed that his best course was to take his wife into his confidence as soon as he returned. After all, he had lied for her sake as much as for his own, and she ought to understand that it had been the only thing he could do in the circumstances. But would she understand the circumstances? Now that he came to review them, he was bound to admit that they sounded unlikely. And Alice's disposition was so much less trustful than it had been when they were engaged! He gulped his wine, and wished with all his heart that he had left Miss Irene Thorpe in the Strand.

He left her in the palm court. She was chattering eagerly, and he could say no more apart to her than "You have nothing to pay in the morning!" He had meant to put the money for her bill into her hand, but the situation made it difficult for him to do so, and he arranged the matter at the office instead.

He was on poor terms with himself as he drove to Waterloo. Leaving aside the consequences of the introduction, the girl had destroyed his earlier impression of her—or he said that she had. In truth, though it had been her despair that awoke his interest, it had been her individuality that sustained it, but he did not choose to acknowledge that now. He felt that his judgment had been at fault; she appeared more capable and less deserving than she had done when he invited her—less deserving, at all events, of the predicament into which the invitation had betrayed him. How could he expect to persuade Alice that he had committed this list of charitable idiocies for such a girl as he had left in the Carlton lounge? Yet he would have to make the attempt—and the sooner the better! Fortunately he would be at home again in a few days' time!

Was it a fact that she was less deserving? Miss Thorpe, on her side, denied his right to think so. She had been quite alive to the alteration in his manner—his glance, his bearing, in ta-

king 'eave of her, had been eloquent of grievance. At what? After appealing to her boldness to extricate him, he had reproached her for being bold. She had pardoned the appeal, but the reproach burned. She was angry, angry with fate for exposing her to humiliation, angry with the man for spoiling the gratitude of her remembrance of him.

Then other thoughts, humorous, inconsequent, supervened. Her mind began to dwell on the effect she could create if she were to say casually: "I'm not Miss Teesdale at all, I never saw Mr. Barton in my life until this evening." She wondered precisely what expressions the faces would wear, which of the trio would be the first to speak, and what the words would be. An hysterical curiosity grew so strong that for a second she almost feared to find herself proclaiming the fact. She drew a sharp breath, and tapped time, trembling, to the band.

"Are you fond of music, my dear?"

"Yes," she said; "very!"

It was increasingly like a scene on the stage—the strains of the valse, the women trailing elaborate gowns down the center entrance, the secret knowledge that all the time she was "making believe." A powdered footman tendered her coffee and liqueurs. "No liqueur, thank you, Mrs. Lee"—one of the lines of the part! And, like the stage again, when the brief performance ended, Irene Thorpe would "change" into her shabby frock and go out into the cold.

Into the cold! It was there, through the glass doors. To-morrow she would be back on the wrong side of them. Clasp the luxury to your heart, girl, to picture it from the pavement!

The bedroom uplifted her less when she had said good night. She viewed its elegance, wondering where her attic would be next day; she did not wonder "what it would be like," because the only difference among such attics is their address. Now the reflection that the pier-glass showed was not triumphant—it nodded wistfully.

At the same moment, Mrs. Hollings-

worth was saying to her husband, as a taxicab took them back to Sydenham:

"What on earth made you press the girl to come home with us, George? You're so inconsiderate, I never knew such a man. Fancy having to ask Mortimer to make up the bed in the spare room at this time of night! You do such ridiculous things."

George Hollingsworth found his wife more wearisome than any one else in the world, creditors included, but his remonstrances were seldom violent.

"Do you think so, Sunshine?" he said. "I'm afraid I didn't ponder whether the servant would be pleased or not."

"I'm sure one would think a house was an hotel, the way you go on! If you had to see to it all you'd know what an anxiety everything is."

He puffed his cigar equably. "It'd be a first-class move to get Miss Teesdale to come to us, my dear."

"What?" she said. "Why?"

"She'd be a ripping match for Ralph."

"Ralph?"

"The best stroke of luck that'll ever come his way. I dare say all those girls'll get thirty or forty thousand pounds apiece when Teesdale goes."

The lady was silent. Motherlike, she did not want her son to marry, but, motherlike, she was jealous of her nephew. For Ralph to make as wealthy a marriage as Charlie's would certainly be sweet. Her brother's career she had contemplated with pride; his rise gratified her, she had boasted of the price he paid for his new car, and exaggerated the number of his acres with a satisfaction that verged upon the arrogant—he was her own flesh and blood. But she had detested her sister-in-law for participating in the acres and the car, while she herself was condemned to take an omnibus, and even more bitterly had she resented the good fortune of her nephew. When her nephew was sent to Harrow, her son was at a private school in Bloomsbury. When Charlie was a "swell at Oxford," Ralph was a clerk in his uncle's office. When Charlie became a partner in the firm,

Ralph had become a struggling artist. Yes, for her boy to marry a Teesdale girl, like his "lordly cousin," would mean a triumph indeed!

"What nonsense you do talk!" she said fretfully.

"I'd like to see them engaged, I can tell you! Do *us* a bit of good, too! Why not? Teesdale would kick at first, but he'd come round, if the girl had set her heart on it. Better than painting pictures for a living! It wouldn't be a bad scheme to telephone to her in the morning before she leaves!"

CHAPTER III.

Ralph Hollingsworth did not share his mother's jealousy of his cousin, nor had Charlie Barton a dislike for Ralph. On the contrary, he felt both affection and esteem for him. He had always respected the dogged perseverance with which the clerk in the office had labored to escape from it. Art itself said nothing to Barton, but he could admire the pertinacity of the artist. That his cousin was art-struck was no doubt a pity, but while one might deplore his aim, one was bound to admit that the grit he showed in executing it was jolly fine! It had been "jolly fine," too, to face hardships so cheerfully when he had cut the clerkship and was supporting himself by black-and-white work. Though Ralph was thirty now, and couldn't be making more than two or three hundred a year by his profession, he had never accepted the offer of a loan, nor even, it was understood, applied for any assistance to his people. Without their encouragement he had adopted his career, and without their aid he had contrived to live by it. A sterling chap! A bit dry, but sterling—and with a good headpiece, outside commercial matters. As Barton sat yawning over a newspaper in Havre at a little before midnight on the next day but one, he decided that it would be agreeable to intercept his cousin's passage to the boat and bring him in to the hotel.

So when the Paris train arrived, a tall, gaunt man, clad in a shabby ulster,

and carrying a portmanteau, found his way barred by an eager hand.

"Hello, Ralph! You aren't going to cross to-night. I want you to come along to supper."

"Hello, Charlie! What rot! Of course I'm going to cross to-night. What brings you to Havre? Business?"

"You don't think I'd be in Havre on pleasure, do you? Come along, I've turned out expressly to meet you."

"Honest Injun?"

"Honest Injun! I saw Uncle George and Aunt Julia the other day, and they told me you were going over. I've ordered supper and got a room for you."

Ralph Hollingsworth hesitated. "Have you?" he said. "Really? How typical—the importance of the artist's time, as it appears to the business man! If I had been in 'shipping' or shoes or sealing-wax it'd never have entered your head to propose such a thing. The idea's preposterous, and out of the question. But I'll come."

"Right, oh! Where's your baggage?"

"In my hand," said the painter. "Were you looking for trunks, and a valet?"

They strode along the bleak street cheerfully.

"How's your wife, Charlie? And the baby?"

"My wife and the postscript are all right, thanks. How are things with you?"

"Normal."

"That doesn't tell me much, seeing how seldom we meet. Is 'normal' good or bad?"

"'Normal' means pauperdom from the Liverpool point of view, and comparative prosperity according to the Rue Ravignan."

"Then, as you live in the Rue Ravignan, I suppose you're satisfied, eh?"

"Is anybody satisfied? Man is born to dissatisfaction as the sparks fly upward. What have we got for supper?"

"Does that mean you don't want to be confidential?"

"It means that, having disorganized my arrangements at your request, I require to be well fed. It also means that I don't want to talk shop. Another

minute, and you'd have felt bound to say I was 'immensely clever' and you 'expected to see me an R. A.'"

"Modest man! He objects to being praised!"

"You misunderstand the motive. I merely object to unconvincing lies; you can't lie speciously on the subject, because you know nothing about it. Happily, you know more than most English people, since you know the depths of your ignorance; in an outburst of candor you have acknowledged that all pictures look alike to you."

"Excepting the old masters!" put in Barton, with a laugh. "I said 'excepting the old masters.'"

"Which look ridiculous"—I remember! Charlie, I like you for your refreshing frankness. Is this your hotel? Take me in and make me welcome!"

The supper was creditable, the wine was excellent and the cigars were Barton's own.

"Tobacco like this," observed the painter, "would have almost reconciled me to Liverpool. It's consoling to remember that I should never have reached the commercial altitude where it's attainable. How were my people looking? Where did you see them?"

"I saw them in town, at the Carlton; they were dining with Mrs. Lee."

"Woman with no neck, and tons of jewelry? I remember. Was Alice with you?"

"No, it was the evening I crossed, I was there alone. That's to say—" He mused, and added glumly: "I made an ass of myself, between ourselves."

"How?"

"Well— This is in confidence?"

"Understood!"

"Well, as a matter of fact, there was a girl with me. Look here, I give you my word of honor, old chap, that it was all absolutely square. More, I firmly believe she was a respectable girl; if I hadn't believed it, she wouldn't have been there and the trouble wouldn't have happened. It was like this. I saw her in the Strand, a stranger, and she looked so suicidally wretched that I spoke to her, asked her if I could do anything. She said: 'No, thank you.'

But two or three minutes afterward I saw her again—she was looking for me; she said: 'I've changed my mind; if you meant it, will you lend me a pound?"

"A pound? The damsel could open her mouth!"

"It was rather cheek, wasn't it? But somehow I gave it to her."

"You gave it to her? You gave a pound to a girl you had never seen before? What was the matter with a shilling?"

"She wasn't the sort of girl you could give a shilling to; she spoke like a lady, and she was dressed like a lady. I don't mean she was dressed expensively, but she looked all right. It was her being properly dressed that had made her such a shock to me when I saw her first—she had the clothes of a lady and the eyes of a tramp."

"Well?" said the artist, with more attention.

"Well, then I talked to her. She was a journalist, or an actress—"

"Which of them?"

"Both. More actress than journalist, though, I gathered. She told me her name was 'Irene Thorpe'—'Thorpe' sounds genuine?—and she was destitute. No work, and just been turned out of her boarding-house. I had meant to walk as far as her bus with her, but when we were passing the Carlton, it struck me I might as well take her in and give her some dinner. Mind, I'm not pretending she wasn't attractive—I found her rather interesting—but there wasn't a single word between us that my wife mightn't have heard. It was a stupid thing to do, but that's the worst that can be said of it; or, rather, it's the worst that ought to be said of it. Unfortunately she stupidly didn't end there! She had nowhere to go, and I got a room for her in the hotel."

"In the name of common sense, why at the Carlton Hotel?"

"Why? Simply because we were in it and she was dog tired. I was leaving at nine o'clock, but I arranged for the girl to stay till the morning. And then we sent the money to settle up at her boarding-house—she couldn't get

her luggage till the bill was paid, that was why she had wanted the pound."

"And did she fork the pound over for the purpose?"

"Yes, she did. I'm bound to say she insisted on forking it over. She may have had a motive, of course. And the messenger-boy came back with her trunk, and two or three shillings' change. Her story was quite true, as it happens; the subsequent events proved it."

"Go on," said Ralph Hollingsworth dryly. "I trust you didn't forget that she might like a box at a theater, and an electric landau?"

"Look here, don't chaff, it's no joke. When she came out of the room, dressed for dinner, I was just coming out of mine, and before we got to the elevator, I'm hanged if we didn't blunder against your mother and Mrs. Lee. You should have seen their faces! It was the tightest corner I ever was in; my head buzzed. For the life of me I didn't know what to say. 'Miss Thorpe, a friend of mine?' That wouldn't have got me off! Aunt Julia I might, possibly, have explained to—she wouldn't have believed it was the truth, of course, but, at all events, she'd have held her tongue. But Mrs. Lee! I knew I must put myself right with Mrs. Lee, or the story would be all over Liverpool, with embellishments. I had to lie, for Alice's sake. I did the only thing I could think of—I said the girl was my sister-in-law, Fanny."

Ralph was serious enough now. "You said she was your sister-in-law?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Fanny. I didn't know why I chose Fanny; her name came first. You see, the devil of it is that whenever Aunt Julia and Uncle George meet Alice, they'll speak of 'Fanny' to her! I'm afraid the only thing for me to do is to tell her the whole story first, but—er—it's a bit difficult."

"I'd strongly recommend you to tell her," said the other man. "You'll probably find yourself in no end of a mess if you don't. But, anyhow, supposing my people meet the real Fanny one day? What are you going to say then?"

"I don't see why that should ever happen. Besides, if Alice did know, they need never hear that Fanny *was* Fanny; they could be told she was Nelly, or Muriel, or Kathleen. No, what one must expect is their speaking to Alice—I wish it weren't such an awkward affair for me to explain to her. She's the best woman alive; she's an awfully good sort, really, but women don't have these impulses—if a woman were infinitely affected by the sight of a fellow creature's distress, she might pull out sixpence. It's difficult to make a woman understand that you spent three or four pounds on a girl purely from sympathy."

"All the same, you've got to try to make a woman understand it," said Ralph. "Not that you did spend it purely from sympathy—you found the hussy 'attractive and interesting.'"

"My dear fellow," said Barton irritably, "there are some things that nobody believes unless they happened to himself; I'm man of the world enough to have learned that."

"And I'm man of the world enough to have learned that nothing between man and woman is too extraordinary to be a possible fact. I don't doubt your version in the least, old chap. I only doubt the girl's respectability."

"As for that, I was with her over three hours," rejoined Barton. "I ought to be able to form an opinion. Respectable, yes; quite so—quite so helpless as I had taken her for, no."

"In other words, an adventuress?"

"I admit that I was disappointed in her—she was too jolly clever. We all dined together, and the way she played up to the situation was an eye-opener. I had expected her to be scared out of her wits. No more beauty in distress for *me!*"

"Take your wife into your confidence as soon as you get back. It wouldn't surprise me to hear that, after you had gone, your protégée touched the governor for a sovereign. That'll be another pound she'll have cost you." He laughed grimly. "And your wife'll have to write and thank him for 'his kindness to her sister'!"

The conversation drifted into other channels, and momentarily both men forgot the girl who had committed the disastrous sin of being clever.

CHAPTER IV.

Ralph did not proceed to Sydenham until some hours after his arrival in London, and when he reached The Cedars he found his mother in the drawing-room alone. Her greeting was composed of pleasure and complaint in equal parts.

"Oh, here you are!" she exclaimed. "We began to think you were never coming. How are you, dear? You look very well. We waited for you till the lunch was quite spoiled," she added querulously. "Shall I tell them to get you something to eat? I can ring, if you like?" This offer was plaintive, and when he assured her that he had lunched in town she was visibly relieved. Unthinkingly he lit a cigarette, and she cried: "Oh, not in here, Ralph! We'll go into the other room if you want to smoke. Only there's no fire in there."

He threw the cigarette away, and sat down with the growing sense of depression which he always associated with home.

"There, that's better," she said. "Now we can talk comfortably. How are you getting on? We were very pleased to hear about your picture in the Autumn Salon. But I do wish you lived in London! What's the use of painting pictures where nobody sees them? I'm sure nobody knows whether you're getting on or not."

"There are a few people to see them in Paris," he pointed out.

"Oh, French people! Mrs. Lee was asking about you the other evening, and I must say I couldn't help feeling you were 'out of it' over there. I should like to see you settle down in London and take a nice house."

"I'm sure you would, mother. Where's the governor? Isn't he at home?"

"He was obliged to go to a board

meeting. I expect him back any minute now. And we've a visitor here. Such a nice girl! You'll see her directly, she has just gone down to the shops for something—Miss Teesdale."

For a moment he didn't speak. When he did, he said sharply: "Who?"

"Fanny Teesdale, a sister of Alice's. She's spending a few days with us. Quite a coincidence your coming over at the same time; so fortunate! I'm sure you'll like her, your father and I took to her at once. I'm sure she seems almost like one of the family!"

He mustn't jump at conclusions—it was possible, just possible, that the visitor was really Fanny Teesdale. But his brow rucked, and his mouth was hard.

"I didn't know you knew the Teesdales?"

"No, we didn't, we only met her the other evening. We met her with Charlie at the Carlton, when we were dining with Mrs. Lee. We took such a fancy to her that we made her come to us for a week or two. That's to say, she said she would come for a day, but we keep persuading her to stay on. I'm sure it's quite a treat to me to have somebody to talk to, your father never takes any interest in anything that concerns me. I have no one to tell things to at all! I think he gets worse every year—so wrapped up in himself! He doesn't want to hear about anything that goes on; he's a most uncompanionable man. You don't look very pleased. I should have thought you'd have been glad there was a nice girl here."

He was remembering wrathfully that he must say nothing to betray Barton's confidence; he must order the woman from the house without rousing his parents' suspicion.

"Nice girls," he murmured, "aren't much in my line. I'm too busy."

"Oh, nonsense!" said his mother. "A nice girl is in every young man's line. Wait till you see her. I shouldn't be surprised if you wanted to paint her portrait."

"I should! How's Alice, by the bye? Have you heard from her lately?"

"Do I ever hear from her, unless she wants me to do something for her?"

"I thought you might have written to each other since Miss Teesdale has been here?"

"Oh, no. Miss Teesdale wired to her mother and father that she was coming to us, but I haven't heard from Alice, nor from them yet. Did you see Charlie in Havre?"

"Yes. I spent a day with him there. He's very fit."

They talked desultorily until George Hollingsworth returned. With his return came an adjournment to the library, and in the library the artist was startled by the matrimonial project that had been formed for him.

"I suppose your mother has told you that Miss Teesdale is with us? Charming girl!" He smiled significantly. "Make hay while the sun shines, my boy; that's my advice to you. It's a bit of luck for you, her being here."

"Oh, you think so, sir?"

"Ten thousand of the best on her marriage, I expect! And I dare say she'll get thirty or forty thousand more when her father dies. A pretty girl, besides! What a chance for a fellow!"

Ralph perceived that his parents would experience a heavy blow when they heard that "Miss Teesdale's" visit was to be abruptly terminated. In the circumstances, there was no need to disturb their serenity by opposition.

"It sounds an attractive blend," he confessed.

"Go in and win! You'll be with her all day; you ought to be engaged in a week. Take her for walks—she's fond of walking; she's always writing letters, and going to the post with them herself. You can go to the post, too. Teach her billiards. Jimmy Troode got engaged to Miss Thwaites-Kerr teaching her billiards. Dear old Jimmy couldn't raise a 'pony' at the time, and Thwaites-Kerr's daughter might have married a duke. Best shooting in the county Jimmy's got to-day! He used to swear there was nothing like billiards for pulling these things off—showing the girl how to make a bridge was so useful! And you can talk art to her; she seems

interested in art. What a fine thing! If you let it slip, I tell you you'll only be sorry once, and that'll be all your life." His counsel continued until tea-time.

It was at tea that Ralph first saw the adventuress. He looked up curiously as the door opened.

"Oh—er—my dear," said Mrs. Hollingsworth, "let me—er— My son, Miss Teesdale."

"How do you do, Mr. Hollingsworth?" The voice was pleasant.

"How do you do?"

He was going to crush her, but it was necessary to take her hand. She sat down by the fire composedly, and the man stole another glance at her. She was different from what he had vaguely pictured—Younger, gentler-looking. He wouldn't have believed her capable of such deceit. What a fraud she was to have a face like that!

"Did you have a nice walk, my dear?"

"Oh, it was scarcely a walk. I wasn't out long, was I? I knew you must have lots to say to Mr. Hollingsworth, though, after such a long time. They've been counting the hours for you, Mr. Hollingsworth—there have been visions of wrecks at sea, and collisions on shore."

The audacity of her! But, in front of people, he must be civil, for Charlie's sake.

"Believe me, I feel very guilty. I must apologize for your spoiled luncheon."

"It wasn't spoiled," she smiled; "it was delicious."

"Mother!"

"I'm sure everything was ruined; Miss Teesdale is only being polite."

"Miss Teesdale is forbidden to be polite," said George Hollingsworth jocosely. "It's only since one was privileged to be sincerely rude in other people's houses that staying in other people's houses became endurable. To accept hospitality in the mid-Victorian period was to suffer martyrdom. I remember my old colonel's wife—tremendously pretty woman, immensely popular in society—used to say that the

strain of being amiable to so many hostesses had made her an absolute fiend at home. Only a joke, of course, a perfectly sweet-tempered woman—all the Hadlow-Vavasours were! Well, tell us something, Ralph! I hear great accounts of your Salon picture—it made something of a sensation in Paris, eh?"

"I didn't hear so in Paris," said Ralph. "I know it was abominably hung."

The parental glance proclaimed such candor an indiscretion. "These artists never realize their ideals, Miss Teesdale, so they're always depreciating their own talents."

"Not many of them, surely," she said. "I always thought it was rather the other way."

"Oh, well"—he laughed, as at a witicism—"perhaps so! Perhaps I should have said '*this* artist.' I'd like you to see some of his work. I'm sure it would appeal to you. It's—it's—well, there's a— I'm not a critic—but there's a feeling about it that's altogether above the perceptions of the ordinary British mind."

"You flatter my judgment. Remember I'm a benighted person from the provinces!"

"Oh, Liverpool!" he cried, and would hear no disparagement of her native city.

Ralph sat relieved that the conversation had been diverted from the subject of his own achievements, and questioning how soon he could make an opportunity to do what must be done. He had no intention of tolerating her presence here another night, and for more reasons than one desired that her departure should be made early in the evening. It was already five o'clock. He hoped that he might find himself alone with her before dinner, but the group showed no signs of dispersing, and it began to look as if he would be compelled to turn her out at an unconventionally late hour, or to countenance her imposture till the morning.

It was with considerable satisfaction that he saw his father get up with an excuse about some orders that he had to give to the gardener, and when his

mother remembered soon afterward that she ought to answer some letters, the crisis was close at hand. The girl remained sitting on a stool before the fire; the man lounged on the hearth, waiting till the servant had removed the last of the tea-things. While the servant was in the room, small talk must be sustained; his answers were suave.

"No, I'm not home for long, only for a few days. Of course, I like to get over as often as I can."

"I suppose you can't manage to work here? What a fascinating profession it must be, Mr. Hollingsworth!"

"It is to *me*."

"And Paris must be an ideal place to work in."

"Do you know it?"

"No; I've never been there. I imagine it—quite wrongly, I dare say—a place where everybody loves art, and starves wittily."

"Yes, Paris isn't like that."

"I suppose not. I suppose it can be just as brutal as any other city?"

"Quite, Miss Teesdale."

The servant withdrew. There was a moment's pause, in which he stood looking down at her. When the footsteps had died away, he spoke again peremptorily:

"Miss Thorpe, you will leave the house this evening."

CHAPTER V.

The gasp was horrible; her figure drooped there, stricken. Then, very slowly, she raised herself, and, without glancing at him, tottered to the door.

"Please wait a minute," he said sternly. "My mother and father are not to learn that they have been deceived; you must excuse yourself to them for going so suddenly."

"How?" she asked, in a whisper.

"You will say that you have had a telegram—I took it in for you just now."

She nodded.

"A cab will be here in half an hour to take you to the station."

"I don't need a cab," she stammered. "I shall send for my trunk."

"You will leave in the natural way. It will be necessary for my father or me to go to the station with you; possibly my father may choose to go. In case you haven't recovered your effrontery by then, the telegram should be said to contain bad news."

Her hand trembled toward the door-knob.

"I haven't done. I must ask you whether you have obtained any money in Miss Teesdale's name since you have been here?"

The blood surged to her bowed face. "No."

"Also whether you contemplated doing so in the cab, assuming that my father takes you?"

"I do not contemplate the theft, Mr. Hollingsworth."

"Your sensitive honor revolts at the suggestion? I inquired because, as you are personating a lady, the sums would have to be repaid—ostensibly by her. That's all, then. I won't detain you from your packing."

"Are you quite sure you don't wish to degrade me any more?" She fronted him shakily.

"Degrade? A girl who requites a man's help as infamously as you have done mustn't look for respect. Mr. Barton befriended you, and you took advantage of his generosity to worm your way into the house of his relatives as a liar and a cheat."

"I did not worm my way. I was pressed to come."

"And you did the detestable thing, careless what misery it caused to him or to his wife."

"That's false."

"Don't talk bosh to me! You're no unsophisticated girl—you're a scheming woman. You knew that, as a married man, he must suffer for what had happened if the truth were found out, and that your coming here increased the risk. But you hoped nothing would be discovered till you were gone and you didn't care. For the sake of idling in comfort for a week or two, you were ready to ruin the happiness of a man who had shown you the greatest kindness."

"I say it's false. I didn't see that it made his position better or worse; he had introduced me as Miss Teesdale—it was said, it was done! I knew he would be furious when he heard. I feared I might be degraded as you have degraded me, but I swear that at the moment the risk seemed all my own."

"What moment?"

"The moment when I was pressed to come."

"Even if you were as slow-witted as you say, there was plenty of time to consider afterward."

"There wasn't—your mother telephoned to me in the morning to come at once."

"Telephoned where?"

"To the Carlton, the morning after I met her."

"How could she telephone to you at the Carlton? Mr. Barton hadn't taken a room for 'Miss Teesdale'?"

"She couldn't get on to me, but she asked for Mrs. Lee."

"Didn't it strike her as extraordinary that Miss Teesdale wasn't known in the hotel?"

"She concluded that the room had been booked in Mr. Barton's name. Ask her if I was 'ready' to come! Ask her how hard she had to persuade me! I was just going away. I had about three shillings to keep body and soul together till I found something to do. London was black with fog. And then her message came. 'It's a terrible day,' she said. 'You mustn't travel!' I told her I was bound to go. She asked me to come here for a fortnight. I said I couldn't. 'A week?' I said it was impossible. 'Well, come for a day!' And I wouldn't do that. I kept repeating that I couldn't. But she wouldn't take 'no' for an answer. Your father came to the phone, too. All the time that I refused I was seeing the black streets—and at the other end there were the voices, pleading, persisting, offering me rest!"

"Offering it to Miss Teesdale! You gained the hospitality by imposture."

"Was the hospitality itself above reproach?"

"I don't understand you."

"I gather that Miss Teesdale has a wealthy father."

"What of it?"

"Merely that I was invited for that reason. Every hour that I have stolen here, your talents and your graces, Mr. Hollingsworth, have been dinned into my ears. Every hour that I have stolen here, you have been thrown, matrimonially, at my head! The imposture wasn't all on one side. Your parents have pretended sudden friendship for me that they might provide you with a rich wife. I have pretended to be Miss Teesdale that I might keep myself out of the streets. Was my motive so much more indefensible than theirs?"

"You can't exonerate yourself by insulting my parents, Miss Thorpe."

"I beg your pardon, I shouldn't have said it. But I did *not* come for the sake of 'idling in comfort.' I came for the sake of getting a shelter till I had work. I have answered all sorts of advertisements from the day I arrived, and gone out with the answers myself, because the addresses would have looked strange to the servants. I've called at the poste restante, praying there might be a letter for me! As God's my witness, I meant to leave here at the first moment I had anywhere else to go to. Till then this was my only chance in the world. I took it as a 'liar and a cheat?' I know! But I was a girl without a home."

He moved about the room. His voice was not quite steady when he spoke:

"I'm sorry if I've been needlessly rough. I can understand that you were tempted."

"If you have nothing more to say to me, I'll go up-stairs and pack."

"May I ask what you mean to do?"

"Simply to obey."

"When you reach town? You must have some—some idea, some vague intention?"

"Perhaps."

"You prefer not to talk about it?"

"It's hardly necessary—you know my circumstances, and you know the world."

"You tell me you had about three

shillings the morning you came here. And you've been answering advertisements. You must be about penniless?"

She was silent.

He glanced at her, embarrassed, and paced the room more rapidly.

"There will be a little money to support you for a few days. I've no wish for you to walk into the streets destitute."

"I would rather walk into the Thames," she said, "than take any help from you."

"Why?"

"Because I hate you!"

"You hate me because it was my duty to forbid your intrusion. Is that intelligent?"

"I hate you because you have taunted me, and trampled on me, and done your duty like a brute. Is it from any sympathy for my needs that you offer me money? No, it's to preserve your self-approval, that you may look back without a twinge—you don't want to remember that you sent a girl straight into the river, or to hell!"

"It's easy to impute the meanest motives to any action."

"You found it so when you judged mine."

"Sit down."

"Hasn't it lasted long enough?"

"Sit down. I want to talk to you."

She sat at the foot of the couch, her breast tumultuous, her mouth painfully controlled.

"Miss Thorpe, I ask your pardon for some of the things I've said. If it's any comfort to you to know it, you've hit back hard—I never felt so cheap in my life! But I'm fond of Barton, and when I found you masquerading here, it made me savage. I did do my duty like a brute—I'm awfully sorry, and ashamed."

Her defiance broke; she was sobbing heavily, her face in her hands.

He stood by her for a moment or two in constrained silence, then lounged to the hearth, and drummed his fingers on the mantelpiece; turned again, and watched her, distressed.

"Suppose we make it as easy for each other as we can," he said at last.

"You'd better let me go up-stairs," she quavered, dabbing at her eyes.

"Won't you tell me first what you think of doing?"

"I sha'n't do anything dreadful."

"But how are you going to live?"

Her gesture was helpless.

"You've no prospect from the advertisements, I mean?"

"Nothing has come for me so far."

"There has hardly been time, has there?"

"Not for the things I wrote about yesterday."

"Perhaps there'll be something to-morrow. How can you call at the post-office to-morrow?"

"I don't know."

"You've been on the stage, haven't you? Wouldn't you be likelier to get work on the stage more quickly than anywhere else? At all events, you've some experience to quote, as an actress. Without experience, I don't see how you can expect—"

"I've written to a theatrical agent, too. I told him I'd take anything, it didn't matter what it was, so long as he could put me into it at once!"

"I should have written to all the agents if I had been you."

"Lloyd has got me things before. It was no good my writing to agents who didn't know me; it would have been wasting stamps."

There was another pause—a long one.

"It's a tight corner," he confessed. "It's a tight corner for everybody!"

"For Mr. Barton?"

"Mr. Barton will have to tell his wife what happened, of course; whether she'll believe him remains to be seen. From the little I know of her, I— But we've got to decide about you, not the Bartons; it's all rubbish your saying you won't let me do anything for you in the meantime. You can't help yourself."

She rose. "Thank you; no."

"Because you hate me! Come, talk sense. Hate me as much as you think I deserve, but don't play the fool. You can't live on air, you know."

"It's very kind of you, but I mean it.

I won't take a penny. It isn't because I hate you."

"Then why is it?"

"Good-by, Mr. Hollingsworth."

"Why is it?"

"Because it's preposterous, monstrous. I should loathe myself!" she said thickly. "Oh, I know I begged from Mr. Barton, and I've cheated your parents, and I'm all that you told me I was; but I haven't sunk to taking money from every man I meet. I've no doubt you think it a pose, a maneuver, but—"

The door-handle was turned from the outside, and the servant entered again.

"The telephone, sir—the master's out, and Mrs. Hollingsworth gave orders that she wasn't to be disturbed."

"Well, tell them to ring up later," he said.

"If you please, sir, I think it's important. I was told to say it's 'Mrs. Barton,' sir."

"Mrs. Barton!" he exclaimed. "Very well, I'll go and speak to her." His startled glance met Irene's. "Wait!"

She nodded, trembling. His voice reached her from the hall distinctly:

"Hello! Hello! Yes, it's I, Ralph. What? I'm very sorry to hear that! Oh? Yes, of course. Certainly, I'm sure she'll be delighted. Is Charlie at home? Oh! Yes, I saw him there. Yes, she'll ring you up presently. Good-by."

His face was concerned; he shut the door.

"She's coming here," he announced. "She wants my mother to put her up!"

Instantaneously she did not catch his drift.

"I shall be gone," she muttered.

"You'll be gone, but she'll hear that 'her sister' has been staying with us. I can't prevent it! To ask my people not to mention you would be blackening Barton to them."

"Perhaps, by this time, he has told what he did. She can't blame him for what I've done since."

"He isn't back; he has told her nothing—you may be sure he'd wait till he got home. I don't see a way out. I

couldn't say my mother wouldn't have her!"

"You," she suggested; "you can explain to her before she sees any one else! Tell her how he met me, why he said I was his sister-in-law; make her understand that he had nothing to do with my coming here, that he doesn't even know I came."

He frowned.

"The explanation should have been made before she found anything out—it'll look trumped up now. And her husband's friend isn't the likeliest person to convince her."

"Who would be?"

"Her husband. Or"—he hesitated—"you! Have you got the pluck to face her?"

"Yes, if you think it would be best."

"In the circumstances, I think it would be far best—for her and him. It wouldn't be pleasant for yourself, she isn't likely to be patient."

"I must bear that if I can do any good."

His glance was admiring. "You will tell her just what occurred that evening, and the advantage that you've taken of it?"

"I will tell her all. What time will she be here?"

"She won't be here till to-morrow, she was phoning from Liverpool. She has an appointment with an oculist in the morning. I suppose she'll be here some time during the afternoon."

"To-morrow!" Her astonished eyes met his questioningly.

"Yes, I know," he said. "And I'm afraid I haven't the right to ask the favor of you; but if you *would* wait to see her to-morrow, you'd be doing rather a fine thing, and I should be grateful."

"I will wait, Mr. Hollingsworth."

"I thank you, Miss Thorpe, very sincerely. Is it too much to hope that you'll bury the hatchet and shake hands?"

"You—you want to shake hands with an adventuress?" she faltered.

"No," he said. "If you let me, I want to shake hands with a brave girl!"

The girl gave him her hand, and he held it fast.

CHAPTER VI.

The evening was a strange one to both of them. She had anticipated an evening of constraint and wretchedness, but the understanding between them, which separation would have dulled, was strengthened by the hours of intercourse. After dinner they talked in the billiard-room, at first of the coming interview, but not of that all the time. The man found himself questioning her with interest about her life; the girl found herself answering him freely. He spoke of his own struggles, the days when he rarely had had enough to eat; and to learn that he had been very poor amazed her. She told him some of her stage experiences; told them with un-designed touches of humor that made him laugh. It had been his intention to raise her spirits; he had not expected to improve his own. He understood his cousin's having taken her to the Carlton; comparatively, he would have done as much for her himself.

But the menace of the morrow was before them, though they might turn their heads aside in moments, and it was to the morrow that the talk reverted again and again. The vital question was how she was to see Mrs. Barton alone as soon as the lady arrived.

"If she sees my people first," he said, "they'll speak of her sister being here, and the cat will be out of the bag; doubtless she knows that her sister is at home, and she'll tell them so. She must have a chance of hushing the thing up if she wants to—and she probably *will* want to, for Barton's sake, and her own. It'll avert only half the mischief if you explain matters to her after she has spoken to my mother."

"How am I to prevent it?" asked Irene painfully. "Shall I go to the station? But then I don't know her!"

"I'm not sure that she'll come by train; she may take a cab. I should think it's the more likely. Can't you think of anything?"

"Supposing I asked Mrs. Hollingsworth to let me see her privately directly she came?"

"What for? You'd have to give a reason."

"Yes." She sighed.

"It would sound an extraordinary request, wouldn't it?"

"I'm afraid it would," she owned.

"I tell you what! I might ask my mother— No, that wouldn't do, either!"

"What were you going to say?"

"I was going to say we might ask my mother not to mention your being here, because you wanted to give your sister a surprise." He regarded her apologetically.

Laughter struggled with concern in her gaze.

"Yes, I admit it," he said; "infantile! Well, I don't see what other course is open to us."

"Supposing you spoke to Mrs. Barton instead of to your mother? Couldn't you warn her not to give anything away till she had seen me?"

"That's it," he said. "Yes, I might do that. Well, even then she's got to see you alone. You'll have to be upstairs. That's another strange thing. Why don't you come down when 'your sister' arrives?"

"I have a headache," she said.

"Y-e-s, yes, you have a headache. And you weren't expecting her so early. Well, but who's going to suggest her going up to you? *She* can't; she's not intimate enough here!"

"Your mother," she said, "would naturally say: 'Wouldn't you like to run up-stairs and see Fanny?'"

"Would she? I'm not so sure. My mother would be looking for Fanny to come down any minute. No, you'll have to send down a message. 'Your head is still aching, and will your sister go up to you?' That's all right, isn't it?"

"Y-e-s."

"Well, what's the matter with it?"

"It's all right if Mrs. Barton's astonishment hasn't got the better of her by then. There'll have been a lot of talk about 'her sister,' won't there?"

"I shall prepare her to hear that her sister is in the house," he said. "I shall tell her to express no surprise, whatever is said."

"It'll be a cheery welcome for her! Is she intelligent?"

"What?" he laughed. "I don't know her very well. Oh, I suppose she's intelligent enough to hold her tongue for ten minutes, if she's cautioned to do it."

"But she'll ask *you* what it all means."

"She may, but there won't be time for me to answer. I shall speak to her as she gets out of the cab. There'll only be an instant before my mother joins us. It's absolutely the only plan. I wish——"

"What?"

"I was thinking what a good thing it would have been if you had met *me* instead of Barton. Then there would have been none of these complications at all."

She contemplated the spot ball thoughtfully. "I wonder——"

"Go on. What do you wonder?"

"Perhaps you wouldn't have spoken to me?"

"Barton said he spoke to you because you looked 'so suicidally wretched.'"

"Did he? Would *you* have spoken to me if you had thought I looked suicidally wretched?"

"Yes. Would *you* have asked *me* what you asked *him*?"

"I wish I hadn't asked him. I—I think I'm as ashamed of that as of this. It was awful, wasn't it? I hope he told you I said I'd pay it back?"

"Yes, I think he did."

"I don't suppose he believed me, though?"

"I do."

"Do you?" she cried. "Truth?"

"Yes."

"I'm so glad. I wish I could tell you how I feel about it all!" Tears sprang to her eyes.

"Don't worry over trifles; your debt to Mr. Barton doesn't matter the least bit in the world. Only I wish it had been to me instead. I wasn't there. It's a rotten life; one never *is* 'there'!"

"That's one of the differences be-

tween life and books; in books the right people——" She stopped, confused.

He finished the sentence for her. "In books, the right people always meet at the right time? Yes. In life, they keep passing each other in the crowd, and if they meet at all, they only meet when there's a muddle. That's why the realistic story is never very popular in this country."

"Are *you* a realist?"

"Yes. Are *you*?"

"In what—in fashion articles? Do you know I've been a journalist? Actress, music-mistress, journalist—I wonder if I shall ever be a success?"

"There's plenty of time for that."

She raised her head, her eyes were wide. "Will you answer me without beating about the bush? Never mind if you hurt; be—be——"

"Be a brute again?" he said. "All right, I will. What do you want to know?"

"Do you think I can ever live this down? Really? If I worked ever so hard—don't you think I should always be—— I've done something that stains, haven't I? I can never be quite respectable again?"

"You've made me promise to be candid. In some people's eyes you can never be the same. Thank God I'm not one of them! For goodness' sake don't nurse the idea that what you've done is irreparable; that's the worst frame of mind you could get into. Set yourself to wipe it out; try to arrive at the point where your having done it sounds incredible to you. I'd like to see you make a success of life; if you go back to the stage, I shall look for your notices. Is 'Irene Thorpe' your own name?"

"Oh, yes. I thought I was going to make my name illustrious. I didn't change it when I went on the stage. I wanted to see my own name in big print; not one that didn't belong to me. When I was an idiot and expected to play *Juliet*, I used to fancy how 'Irene Thorpe' would look in large fat letters on the London hoardings. I'd be thankful to-day to see it in tiny type on a play-bill in the Smalls!"

"What are the Smalls?"

"The third-rate provincial towns, where they like their plays with murders in them—the more murders the merrier. How are you to get on? You can't play that sort of trash intelligently, and you'd be a failure if you did. I tried once. Most of the time I had to behave as if I were a lunatic, but I spoke the lines like a human being. It was quite a fascinating experiment."

"But it didn't come off?"

"Far from it. In one scene, the villain used to leave his chambers in Piccadilly for the Surrey village in a fur overcoat; and in the next, I used to be sitting bareheaded in the Surrey garden, in a muslin frock! I put on a hat and winter jacket that night. There was an awful row. And where there should have been rounds of applause, there wasn't a hand. At the end of the garden scene, the manager told me if I 'didn't do better in the next act I could get out of the company.' So I did worse, and stayed. He said 'an artist would have known better than to sit in a garden with a jacket on.'"

"How was the garden painted—summer or winter?" asked Ralph, laughing.

"Oh, it depended on what the theater had in stock. We didn't carry the garden with us. The season varied weekly. Mind, even when there were rhododendrons, the villain clung to his fur overcoat. Nobody objected to that. I asked if an artist would sit among rhododendrons with a fur overcoat on. The manager said: 'If you had had a proper amount of experience, my good girl, you wouldn't show such rotten ignorance!'"

He found her increasingly companionable. Compared with the *jeunes filles*, whom he occasionally met during his visits to Sydenham, she was a revelation. He was sorry when his parents came in and proposed to play pool; he was sorry for all the circumstances. When good night was said, it dejected him to think of the ordeal that the morrow was to bring to her; it was disagreeable to reflect that on the morrow she would be gone. As to her going

destitute, he was resolved that it should not be, but he wondered if he would ever see her again after she left the house, and regretted that he couldn't expect to stay in London.

The girl also wondered. She did not sleep till very late; she lay analyzing her motives. They seemed to her queerly involved. Gratitude to Barton had dictated her promise to try to justify him to his wife, but now she perceived that, equal with her sense of duty toward a man who had befriended her to his disadvantage, was a strenuous desire to win the good opinion of a man whom, a few hours earlier, she had hated with all her heart. It was very strange, very new! She wondered if she would ever see him again after she left the house, and regretted that she couldn't expect to work in Paris.

CHAPTER VII.

She was sitting in her room, dressed for the street. Her trunk was packed and locked. Ten minutes ago, from the window, she had seen a cab arrive, and a woman descend from it; a tall, fair woman, expensively clothed. Ralph Hollingsworth had greeted her. Five minutes ago the impostor had pulled her bell, and sent the message to the drawing-room, as arranged. Her face was dead-white now. She strained to catch the sound of the woman's approach, but her heart thumped painfully, and there was a humming in her ears. She felt out of breath.

The door-knob was jerked before she had heard a footstep; the woman came in.

"Mrs. Barton?" Her limbs were shaking as she rose; the voice was a whisper.

"Yes." She paused on the threshold, distantly interrogative. "I understood that 'my sister' wanted to see me. May I ask what this mystery means?"

"Mrs. Barton, I've something to tell you. I must apologize for begging you to come up." She reached the door, and closed it. "I was obliged to ask to see you alone."

"Obliged? Why?"

"They think here that *I'm* your sister."

"They think that you're my sister? What are you talking about?"

"They think that I'm Miss Teesdale."

"You? It was you they meant? I don't understand."

"I was introduced to them as your sister. I want to explain, to tell you how it happened—"

"They believe that you're my sister? And you've let them believe it? You? How dare you do such a thing? How dare you come into the house as—Oh!" She moved impetuously toward the bell.

"Don't ring, I beg you!" exclaimed Irene. "You'll be sorry if you do."

"Sorry?" She stared. Her hand fell. "If you have anything to say, please say it quickly. Either you're mad or you're a case for the police."

"Mrs. Barton, a little more than a week ago I lost my berth on a newspaper. I have no home. I was staying in a boarding-house. When I was dismissed from the paper, I couldn't go on paying there, and they turned me out. I was desperate, and I begged of a stranger in the streets. It was Mr. Barton."

"Mr. Barton?"

"Yes. I told him what had driven me to it, and he saw that I was telling the truth. I had had scarcely anything to eat all day, and, outside the hotel where he was staying, he asked me in to dinner, from charity. It was six o'clock. He went to Havre the same evening." She stopped, struggling to arrange her thoughts. The eyes on her were cold, they confused and shamed her.

"You seem very well informed about Mr. Barton's movements. He invited you to dinner at the Carlton, you say, because you had begged of him in the streets?"

"He invited me to the Carlton because we were standing in front of it, and the invitation was an impulse. I was to go away as soon as dinner was over, but—he knew I had nowhere to go—and afterward he was generous

enough to take a room for me in the hotel for the night. Mr. Barton left at nine o'clock, but *I* remained."

"Really? It is most romantic and interesting. But I don't see what it has to do with your passing yourself off as my sister?"

"I'm coming to that. Mr. and Mrs. Hollingsworth happened to be dining there with a lady called Mrs. Lee. When Mr. Barton saw them he was awfully afraid they would misunderstand. He didn't know how to explain matters; he thought the truth might be disbelieved, and he couldn't allow them to imagine there was anything wrong. We came upon them quite suddenly, and he hadn't much time to consider—he told them I was his sister-in-law."

The other woman's tone was suddenly vehement. "He told them you were his sister-in-law?" she cried.

"Yes. I suppose it was the only thing that occurred to him. I had to bear it out. We all dined together, and Mr. and Mrs. Hollingsworth kept talking to me after he had gone. In the morning they telephoned, asking me to come here. Mr. Barton, of course, had no idea of it. I've behaved abominably—toward him, and them—but I was a pauper, and I came!"

The silence lasted for some seconds. When the wife replied, the contemptuous voice was again under control.

"May I inquire what your object was in telling me this rubbish?"

"Mrs. Barton!" It wasn't a remonstrance, it was an appeal.

"Of course I understand that Mr. Barton doesn't suspect you're in the house—it'll probably be unfortunate for you when he knows—but your story about the way you made his acquaintance is simply stupid. I ask why you wished to tell me such nonsense?"

"I wished to tell you the truth for your own sake, and Mr. Barton's—that you mightn't misjudge him, and that you mightn't put yourself in a false position before his people. If you had been startled—"

"A false position?"

"If you had been startled into betraying that I was a stranger to you, of

course they'd have thought the worst. I didn't think you'd want that. I thought you would be anxious to avoid it."

"Oh—" she laughed bitterly—"I see! So you actually expected to make me countenance your imposture to spare myself humiliation? Upon my word! Your impudence passes belief. I was to keep quiet and let you stay, was I? It's amusing! But you forgot that I've only Mr. Barton's people to consider—it was unfortunate for you that there weren't a tribe of visitors here. You insolent thief, you shall be turned out of the house in five minutes' time!"

"I am leaving the house now. I should have left last night, only I heard you were coming, and I wanted to see you. Mrs. Barton, on my honor——"

"Your what?"

Her head drooped. "On my oath, what I've said is true! If you think that Mr. Barton ever saw me before that evening, or took any more interest in me that evening than what I've told you, you're wronging him cruelly."

"How touching!"

"Mrs. Barton!" She wrung her hands. "I'm not a patient woman, for God's sake don't keep sneering! I've got to make you believe! Help me, don't—don't tempt me to let things slide! I had no motive in waiting for you but the desire to save you unhappiness, to prevent your jumping to a false conclusion when you heard the story from others. You must see that it would have been easier for me to go and let you think what you chose? I'm not trying to make excuses for myself. You've called me a 'thief,' and I *am* a thief, but I don't want to feel that I've made trouble between you and your husband!"

"Don't you think," said his wife calmly, "that it will be all over between you, anyhow?"

"What?"

"I really don't think he's likely to overlook your coming to his people's house. I quite appreciate your anxiety, naturally his friendship is important to you—I shouldn't say you were every man's taste—but I'm afraid

you've done for yourself with him already. You could scarcely expect him to forgive you for visiting his relations, even if you could tell him that you had succeeded in taking me in. By the way, you must have imagined I was a very simple person. Or you're an awful fool yourself. I understand your lying, of course, but you told such clumsy lies, they wouldn't have deceived a child."

"Think what you please about me," panted the girl, "but trust him; insult me as cruelly as you like, but don't suspect your husband. I swear to God you're wrong! I was hungry, and he fed me. I was homeless, and he gave me help. It was because his judgment was better than yours, because he saw I wasn't a bad woman, that he held out a hand to save me? Have you ever been near starvation? Have you ever stood desperate in the streets? It's rather a bad hour, it's rather a dangerous hour, Mrs. Barton, when the lights spring into the windows of the houses and they pull down the blinds, and the girl outside knows that from end to end of the city there isn't a room that belongs to *her*. If you were ever poor, it might teach you pity; it might teach you, the next time you pass a girl as friendless as I was, to turn your head and question what's to become of her. Sometimes—once in a blue moon—there's a good man who does. Your husband was that man to me. And he was a loyal husband to you. That's all. I'd go down on my knees and eat dirt to convince you, but I can't say any more—if you won't believe, you won't!"

"If all else fails," said the other, in measured tones, "you should try the stage."

The girl went blindly to the door, and, with a prayer that she would meet no one on the way, hurried down the stairs. The hall was empty. Voices reached her from the drawing-room, but the drawing-room was at the back. She sped into the drive, and fumbled with the gate. She did not know the road to town, but she meant to walk there. She did not know how she would live in town, but she had to go.

The gate swung to behind her.

CHAPTER VIII.

Left in the room alone, Mrs. Barton first uttered the ejaculation which is inadequately written "Ha!" It expressed in the present instance some defiance, anger, and a lofty satisfaction with the way she had conducted herself. When she had said "Ha!" she stood looking thoughtfully in the direction in which Irene had gone. Next she hastened to the window, and finally, when she turned from it, an observer, if any observer had been there, would have remarked that the satisfaction of her utterance was not corroborated by her face.

In point of fact, she was nearer to crediting the account, extraordinary as it sounded, than she chose to admit to herself, and she was troubled. She was troubled not in the least because it grieved her to think she might have misjudged the girl—the girl had, in any case, committed an infamous action, and deserved to be misjudged—she was troubled by the question of what she was to say when she went down-stairs. If Charlie had really been such a quixotic fool as the creature represented, to figure before his family as an injured wife would be even more distasteful than to figure so with cause. A needless humiliation! On the whole, she would have preferred that they should continue to regard the adventuress as Fanny to the end of time.

But the supposed Fanny had gone, and her sudden disappearance was to be explained only by the truth. And there was her trunk! And perhaps a letter might come from her, some abject, idiotic letter, imploring pardon! In the circumstances it was impossible to leave the Hollingsworths unenlightened. They would have to be told the whole story; she was bound to explain matters to them as soon as she reentered the drawing-room.

Her frown deepened. She had received a telegram from Barton telling her to expect him in Liverpool this evening, and had wired to him that she would be here, that they might return together. His coming meant accusa-

tions and denials in his relatives' presence. She was furious with him for placing her in such a position.

It meant, accusations! Again she perceived that she was insufficiently convinced of his guilt; and, since she was unable to hush the matter up till they reached home, she should certainly reveal it in the character of a broken-hearted woman! Instinctively she looked at herself in the glass; instinctively her features adopted the expression which she felt they ought to wear. Very slowly she went down the stairs, very feebly she opened the drawing-room door, and acted before the group a moment of speechless agitation.

"Well, how is she, my dear?" asked Mrs. Hollingsworth. "Better?"

She put her hand to her eyes, and dropped into a chair.

"I've had a shock," she gasped. "She—she's not my sister!"

The silence was the silence that follows an explosion. George Hollingsworth and his wife stared at her with open mouths. Ralph turned aside, dismayed—had she declined to believe, was she going to make a domestic tragedy? The first to articulate was his father.

"Not your sister?" he exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

"Not your sister?" shrilled the hostess.

"She's a creature that Charlie picked up in the streets. He told you she was my sister because you found her with him in the hotel. Oh, what am I to do?"

"Good heavens, this is the most disgraceful thing I ever heard in my life!" stuttered Mr. Hollingsworth, purpling. "The most disgraceful thing I ever heard in my life!" He looked about him for confirmation. Nobody found anything to add. He repeated incisively: "The most disgraceful thing I ever heard in my life!"

"And to think of the way we've been treating her!" wailed his wife. "Nothing has been too good for her! Send for the police. Don't you hear, George? Send for the police! Are we expected to put up with it? Oh, my goodness, to

think we've been fooled by a hussy like that after all our hopes—I mean, all our kindness!"

"It is," said Mr. Hollingsworth, nodding emphatically, with the air of proclaiming something new, "*the* most disgraceful thing I ever heard in my life! Charlie has behaved like a scoundrel. Alice, my dear, you have our sincere, our most affectionate sympathy."

The maid announced:

"Mr. Barton!"

He came in cheerfully. His wife's attitude supplied his earliest premonition of disaster. The greeting on his lips remained unfinished, and, as he saw the condemnatory faces of his uncle and aunt, he stopped short in the middle of the room, and glanced interrogatively at Ralph.

It was Ralph who relieved the tension.

"You're wanted here, old chap," he remarked. "You've come just at the right time."

"I shouldn't have gathered it," said Barton defiantly. "Alice, haven't you got anything to say?"

She made no response. Mr. Hollingsworth cleared his throat.

"We've just discovered that you've done a blackguardly thing. Alice is, naturally—er— As to your aunt—er— What do you mean by disgracing our house in this way? I ask you what the devil you mean by it?"

Barton shook his head. "This is some extraordinary mistake," he said. "I haven't the least idea what you're talking about."

"I'm talking about the disreputable person you introduced to us as 'Miss Teesdale.' She's in the house now—under our roof!"

"What?" gasped the young man.

"Yes, under our roof! Because we understood she was a lady—and that you were a gentleman!"

"Look here, sir, I say! Draw it mild! I'm tremendously sorry, of course. By Jove, I say, I never dreamed—I'll tell you just how it was. Alice, the whole thing was perfectly innocent. I had no right to say she was Fanny, of course, but I was in

such an infernal fix. Look here, Aunt Julia, if you'll listen, you'll see I couldn't help myself. Ralph knows already, don't you, Ralph? He knows I was going to tell Alice all about it as soon as I got home."

"Yes, you told me that in Havre," assented Ralph.

"Oh, of course you'd agree!" quavered Mrs. Barton.

"Do I understand that Ralph was aware that this person was not Miss Teesdale?" exclaimed George Hollingsworth.

"No, I never said that. I said I had told him I was going to explain to Alice as soon as I got home. If you'll listen—I never saw the girl in my life before that evening. She was stone broke. I gave her a trifle, as I might have given it to any other beggar. But she was educated, told me she was a journalist out of a job. We were in front of the Carlton, and on impulse I said: 'Come in and have some dinner.' I meant to give her a feed and let her go. I don't see any crime in it."

"So chivalrous!" sneered his wife.

"Scarcely the point, I think!" observed his uncle.

"If people will kindly allow me to speak, I'll come to the point. I don't know about it's being 'chivalrous,' it seems to me just decent. The girl had been turned out of her boarding-house—"

"I'm sure I don't wonder at it!" said his aunt. "I dare say she has been turned out of a good many!"

"She had been turned out of her boarding-house because she had no money," cried the young man hotly. "She had nowhere to go, and I paid for a room in the hotel for the night. Why shouldn't I? It wasn't such an expensive pleasure."

"Oh, it was a 'pleasure'?" queried Mrs. Barton.

"Yes, it was—a pleasure to show a little kindness to a respectable girl in want."

"Respectable!" scoffed three voices.

"Her coming here was outrageous," he cried. "As to that, she deserves all you say of her! But I had nothing to

do with it; nothing was further from my thoughts. I never expected to see her, or hear of her again after I left."

"You presented this person to your aunt and me as 'Miss Teesdale,'" repeated George Hollingsworth stridently. "*That* is our point; that is what we complain of. The details of your acquaintance with her are for Alice's consideration. Explain that matter to Alice!"

"I'm explaining to everybody, and I'll explain in my own fashion, sir, if you don't mind! I say that I never expected to see her, or hear of her again, and I certainly didn't expect to meet you and Aunt Julia that night. But you were there, and the position was jolly awkward. If Mrs. Lee hadn't been with you, I should have told you frankly what had happened; as it was, I couldn't. If I had told the truth to Mrs. Lee, she would have taken me for a liar. I had to lie to sound credible. I was thinking of Alice. Was I to let a scandal-mongering stranger go spreading a malicious yarn that would—would poison our happiness? Not much! I did lie. I told the first lie that I thought would pass; and, by Jove, I'd lie over again, if I were in the same hole, rather than Alice should be made unhappy for nothing. The girl's a fraud—as it turns out, she wasn't worth helping. Have her in, send for her, and I'll—I'll— But I couldn't guess she'd do such an ungrateful and impudent thing! More, I disclaim responsibility for it. I didn't propose your inviting her. *My* share of it all is limited to telling you she was Fanny, and I maintain that I did it from very natural, very laudable motives. Give me a cigarette, Ralph!"

"If I may express an opinion, it seems to me a storm in a teacup," said Ralph.

His interest was for Irene now. He went into the hall and rang for a servant, to ascertain if she was up-stairs. He learned that she was not; the servant "thought that Miss Teesdale was out." Gone! He stood aghast, in contemplating her plight, in realizing the difficulty of aiding her. He wondered

precisely what sum she possessed; if she would travel to town by rail or meant to walk. The speediest chance of finding her was offered by the station. He caught up his hat, and made for the station at his best pace.

It was a mile or more away, and when he reached it, it was deserted, excepting for a purposeless porter. A train for Victoria had just left, he was told. Whether she was in it, or making the journey afoot, she seemed, to his distress, equally lost. Neither he nor she was familiar with the direct route to town; to endeavor to overtake her in the streets would be hopeless. He inquired how soon the next train would leave, and returned to the house anxiously.

Meanwhile, following his example, the Hollingsworths had left Barton and his wife together, and also discovered that the girl was gone. There was nothing to be done, then! The hostess indulged in vindictive threats to have the trunk searched, lest any of the silver had been stolen, in angry assertions that she would refuse to let the trunk go when it was sent for. The host smoked inattentively, busy with his reflections. In the drawing-room, Barton was coaxing his wife to amiability, and the lady, by slow degrees, was permitting herself to be coaxed.

At last, in the library, George Hollingsworth remarked: "I suppose the best thing is to put a good face on it, my dear—it'll do us good with Alice, if we make it as easy for her and Charlie as we can. Better persuade her to make it up with him. There are more flies to be caught with honey than with vinegar. She'll have to be grateful if we take it well—we may get in with Teesdale, after all."

And when Ralph reentered, he found that a general reconciliation had occurred; his parents had pardoned his cousin's deception, and Mrs. Barton had accepted her husband's statements. Where recrimination had reigned, there were now pleasantries. Mrs. Barton declared humorously that "Charlie had much too trustful a disposition for this wicked world," and Mr. Hollingsworth

was reminded of a very similar incident that had "happened to an immense pal of his in the Scots Guards." It was very domestic, very harmonious in the suburban drawing-room, and on the man who was harassed by the remembrance of Irene's peril the general complacency jarred a trifle. It appeared to him that none of the circle about the fire would be any the worse for giving a thought to the castaway in the streets. Common sense reminded him that it was unreasonable to ask them to consider her, but common sense was not uppermost in his reflections, and it was a shade sardonically that he remarked: "The only thing overlooked seems to be that there's a strong probability of the girl herself starving to death."

Discord from an unexpected quarter!

"My dear Ralph," expostulated his father blandly, "under the circumstances, I think it's hardly essential for us to concern ourselves about Miss Thorpe? Her name we learn is 'Thorpe'—'Irene' of that ilk."

"The damsel seems to have found another knight!" said Mrs. Barton, with a titter. "Better profit by Charlie's lesson, Ralph—give your sympathy where it's needed."

"Do you know, Alice—it may astonish you to hear it—I rather think that's what I'm doing," he declared dryly. "It appears to me that a girl face to face with destitution does need sympathy, and help, too."

"Sympathy?" ejaculated his mother. "Help? Whatever are you talking about, Ralph?"

The tone of his reply had not pleased Alice Barton.

"I should invite her to the Carlton!" she retorted. "Isn't this funny? I didn't know what an impressionable family I had married into. Ralph, Ralph, my poor boy, what is it that you admire so much—her skinny figure, or her dishonesty?"

"As a matter of fact, I'm admiring her pluck."

"Pluck? Oh, I see. You call it plucky of her to swindle?"

"No. I call it plucky of her to go through an interview with you."

"I say, don't you think we've all had about as much of Miss Thorpe as we want?" struck in Barton. "I tell you frankly I'm sick of the subject. For goodness' sake, let's talk of something else! What about your eye, Alice. What did he say?"

"He has given me a lotion, and something to rub behind the ear. He says it's not serious, I'm not to worry. So you call it plucky of her to go through an interview with me, Ralph? Shall I tell you why she wanted the interview, gallant champion?"

"I know, already."

"I think not. She wanted"—she addressed herself to them all—"she wanted to frighten me into pretending that she *was* Fanny; she reckoned on my backing her up in her fraud in order to spare my own feelings. What do you think of that?"

"Nonsense!" shouted Mr. Hollingsworth. "You don't mean to say—"

"Well I!" cried Barton. "I'm—Upon my word! What—what did you—By Jove, I do wish I had been here!"

"I think I was equal to the occasion," said his wife significantly. "I informed the wretch that as I had perfect confidence in my husband, there was no reason why I should mind telling people the truth. She collapsed. I think she had counted on spending weeks here." She regarded Ralph with a self-satisfied smile.

"You are mistaken," he drawled.

"Mistaken?"

"Your imagination misleads you. She had nothing to gain at all by giving you an opportunity to be discreet, for she had been found out already by me, and knew it. So far from her 'counting on spending weeks here,' she was leaving yesterday, and waited to see you only because I asked her to do so."

"I don't understand!" cried Mrs. Hollingsworth testily. "What is all this? You found her out yesterday? Why didn't you tell us, then? What did you let her keep on deceiving us for?"

"Extraordinary!" murmured his father. "Quite extraordinary!"

"I told her she must go, and she was

going. To upset you in the meantime wasn't necessary. I say she remained at my suggestion that she might explain the facts of the case to Alice. She was ready, eager, to subject herself to contempt and insults, if she could prevent Alice misjudging Charlie. And every one must agree that it was a brave and womanly thing to do, considering that she had nothing whatever to make by it."

"Really," exclaimed Mrs. Barton, with a nervous laugh, "by the way you talk, one would almost think I was the culprit and Miss What's-her-name was the injured heroine. Am I being accused? Pray let me know! Am I expected to be grateful to her?"

"I must admit, Ralph," said Barton, "that your tone is rather peculiar—rather unjust toward Alice."

"The whole business is an abominable nuisance!" roared George Hollingsworth, losing his temper. "It has been finished once—very well, then, let it finish! Who cares whether her motives were good or bad—or whether she sinks or swims? She has gone, and that's all about it!"

"It isn't quite all about it," said Ralph, "because I've got to do my best to find her."

"What?"

"Find her?" shrieked Mrs. Hollingsworth.

"Find her?" raved his father. "Are you out of your mind? Is this damned, infernal affair to go on forever? Is there to be no end to the cursed consequences of Charlie's jackass behavior?"

"Sir!" His nephew eyed him wrathfully.

"I am entirely satisfied that my husband did the very best thing that was possible, Uncle George," said Alice Barton, with frigid reproof.

"*You* may be satisfied, but *I'm* a long way from it," stormed the host. "Now my son has lost his senses about the girl. That's a nice thing for a father to hear!"

"And for a mother, I'm sure!" sobbed Mrs. Hollingsworth. "Oh, of course, Alice and Charlie can be satisfied—it doesn't matter to *them*, *their* happiness

isn't concerned! Never mind what *we* suffer. *Who* are we? So long as they have made it up, it's of no importance what the consequences are to us, or to Ralph! Where are you going, Ralph?" He had looked at his watch, and was crossing the room.

"I'm going to town by the next train," he said quietly. "There's no need for anybody to get excited. My hope is to prevent Miss Thorpe passing the night on the Embankment, that's all. I shall see you and Alice when I come back, Charlie."

A breathless pause ensued. Everybody wondered who would be the first to speak. The hall door slammed.

"After what has been said"—Alice rose, with deliberate dignity—"I think, dear, we'll spare your uncle and aunt the trouble of entertaining us."

"By Jove, you're quite right, darling!" said Barton. "Look here, I don't consider you've spoken to Alice in a proper way at all, Aunt Julia. Instead of being sympathetic, you've been deuced rude to her. I am astonished!"

"Dear me!" sniffed his aunt, ringing the bell.

"We," said George Hollingsworth stiffly, "are astonished by your indifference to the trouble and disgrace you have caused here. Trouble and disgrace!"

The Bartons withdrew haughtily, and the Hollingsworths, discarded, sat contemplating the result of their matrimonial tactics—speechless amid catastrophes.

CHAPTER IX.

Ralph Hollingsworth went to town with little hope. His chance of finding her was painfully slender, was, indeed, limited to the office of the dramatic agent whose name she had casually mentioned to him. Unless she presented herself at the office during the afternoon, his journey must be made in vain.

He had, however, no idea where the office was, and his first proceeding, after leaving Victoria, was to consult a directory. The list showed that one "Albemarle Lloyd" carried on business

as a theatrical agent in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, and, assuming that this was the individual to whom she had referred, the painter took a taxicab there promptly.

A narrow staircase led to a sparsely furnished apartment, of which a striking feature was a vast assortment of photographs depicting Mr. Albemarle Lloyd's clients in various rôles. There were photographs of sirens being humorous in musical comedies, of heroines being pathetic in dramas, of earnest heroes leaning their brows on their forefingers and straining desperately to look profound. A goodly number of the clients were seated in attitudes of depression on the forms that lined the walls, and at a table in the corner a young woman with a quantity of dyed hair, piled above a cheap and obvious "frame," was clicking a typewriter.

Ralph asked her if she would be so good as to tell Mr. Lloyd that he wanted a word with him without delay, a piece of audacity which seemed to amaze her as greatly as if Mr. Lloyd had been the Czar of All the Russias. Having partially recovered from the shock, she inquired coldly if she was correct in thinking that he had no appointment with Mr. Lloyd, and, hearing that she was quite correct, feared with Arctic severity that an interview to-day was out of the question.

The road to histrionic fame appeared to Ralph beset with unsuspected difficulties from the starting-spot. It was with embarrassment that he murmured: "I don't want an engagement. I want to see Miss Irene Thorpe; I suppose she hasn't been in yet?"

To his astonishment, he seemed to have uttered the "open-sesame" to the agent's sanctum.

"Miss Thorpe?" exclaimed the young woman, seizing the mouthpiece of a speaking-tube. "Oh, will you wait a minute, please!" Her altered manner held the promise of good news for the girl; and a few moments later, when he found himself hustled into the great man's presence, it was quite evident that there was something in the wind.

"Well, where is she?" cried Mr.

Lloyd peremptorily, forgetting to say "good afternoon." "She'd better hurry up, or I can't keep it open for her!" He had a high hat on his head, and a long cigar in his mouth—each at an angle of forty-five degrees; his thumbs were hooked in the armholes of his waistcoat. However, his splendor disconcerted Ralph Hollingsworth less than the lofty demeanor of the typist.

"If you mean Miss Thorpe, I hope she'll be here shortly," he said. "What have you got to offer her?"

"You a friend of hers?" demanded Mr. Lloyd. "In the profession?"

"Miss Thorpe is a friend of my people's."

"I wrote to her last night," went on the other heatedly. "I told her to be here at twelve, sharp. Now it's five! Didn't she get the letter? 'Post-office, Sydenham'—that's the address she gave! Well"—he glanced at the clock again—"the office'll be shut directly. If you nab her, you'd better tell her she must see Fair this evening, or it'll be 'off.' Mind, this is done through me—she can't settle with Fair personally, but she'll have to pay my commission just the same! I worked it."

"I've no doubt you'll find Miss Thorpe quite reasonable. But if she comes and finds the place shut up—"

"I can't help that. I've something else to do besides getting 'shops' for girls who don't attend to their business." He struggled into his overcoat. "Look here, if you see her, tell her that Gresham Fair has just taken out 'A Man in a Million' again and his leading woman don't suit. He wants Thorpe, can't wait while another girl rehearses—Thorpe's played the part with him already. She can join at once. Twelve weeks' tour. Three pounds a week. Let her call at the Bijou, Kennington, to-night!" He was already in the waiting-room and, scattering the rush of breathless applicants with "Can't see any of you people to-day!" disappeared down the stairs.

Ralph, not a little relieved to learn of her opportunity, took a seat on one of the forms, earnestly hoping that she would arrive before the office closed.

But it looked unlikely. The clients had already gone their ways, despondent, excepting for a low comedian who murmured confidentially to the typist, in an attempt to arrange an appointment with her employer for the morrow, and an intrepid blonde who had sped at the agent's heels, with a view to obtaining a word with him before he leaped into a cab. When the low comedian departed and the typist began to put on her hat, Ralph sighed a "good day" to her and withdrew.

Now, it was doubtful whether Miss Thorpe would come at all, for she must be aware of Mr. Lloyd's office hours. Still, it was of such importance to her that she should hear of her chance that the painter could not bring himself to leave the spot. He lit a cigarette, and, too much in earnest to be alive to the unexpectedness of his situation, stood immovable before the door.

The throb of pleasure with which he descried her presently was engulfed, as she drew nearer, by pity for her fatigue. Though she had not walked all the way, she had walked sufficiently far to be worn out, and her physical weariness, coupled with the terror of reaching the place too late, had blanched her face appallingly. When she saw him, the surprise brought no color to her cheeks; only her eyes dilated under the listless lids, and as she muttered "You?" the tone was the tone of one whom exhaustion and anxiety had reduced to the verge of collapse.

Acting on the theory that nobody is ever too weak to hear good news, he said instantly:

"It's all right—there's an engagement for you."

Her lips, gray with the dust of the roads, moved voicelessly.

"Come and have some tea, and I'll tell you all about it."

And until the tea was in progress he forbade her to speak—she was merely to listen, he said, and she listened avidly. "Twelve weeks' tour, three pounds a week, can join at once!" He rattled details with the glibness of an expert. Only when they were all imparted and the second teapot appeared

on the scene, was she allowed to talk; and she chattered that she had been to the post-office and found the letter, but that the letter had simply bidden her call on Mr. Lloyd—wherefore she hadn't dared to dream that the luck would be nearly so good as it was.

"I do thank you," she exclaimed, "so very, very much! It was wonderful of you to come. What made you think of it? And then to wait there for me! I shall go to Kennington early. Just imagine, to-morrow night I may be playing again!"

By and by he told her something of the events at Sydenham after her departure, and then, reverting to his purpose in seeking her, he begged her to let him lend her some money until she drew her first week's salary.

But she wouldn't consent.

"Honestly and truly, I don't need it," she explained. "You see, as soon as I have settled with Fair, I can take rooms, and, of course, I sha'n't have to pay for them till the end of the week."

"But you've got to eat in the meanwhile."

"The landlady will get everything in and charge for it in the bill. That's the way it's always done. I sha'n't even want any money for fares, because I shall take rooms close to the theater. Do believe me! I give you my word I don't need a penny, or, rather, I do need just a penny—to go out in the tram to Kennington this evening—and that I've got left! Oh!" She paused, discomfited.

"Well?"

"I'd be grateful if you'd prepay the cost of forwarding my trunk. I'm bound to borrow from you, after all!"

"Where am I to send it—to the Bijou Theater, Kennington?"

"Yes, please. I need it by to-morrow night; there are one or two frocks in it that I shall want for the part."

"But how are you going to get rooms without any luggage?"

"I can say I'm in the company, that will be enough."

"And how are you to manage in them till your luggage comes?"

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"I can borrow a few things from one of the actresses."

"You're unkind," he said, "aren't you? So you'd rather accept a service from a stranger than from me?" And he totally forgot that a little more than twenty-four hours ago he had been a stranger to her, himself.

"She isn't a stranger—I know a girl who is out with the piece; I saw her advertisement the other day—in *The Telegraph*, at Sydenham. I am accepting a service from you, a very big one! Without my frocks, I don't know what I could do."

He perceived that to force her to pocket even the smallest sum would mortify her more than it would aid her. Possessed of one penny she proposed to part from him, and possessed of one penny she must be permitted to go.

But it was pleasant to him to reflect that there remained something to do for her on the morrow, trivial though the duty was; and an hour or so later, when they said good-by, it was the reverse of pleasant to realize that their brief acquaintance had concluded.

Being neither a boy nor a fool, he asked himself whether it was to be approved, this vivid interest in a girl whom he knew only by reason of her having done a disgraceful thing. He had not passed the danger-signal of his thirtieth year without having been in love more than once, and the voice of experience warned him that unless he contemplated seeking the society of Irene Thorpe more than was good for his peace of mind, the regret that he felt at having parted from her was highly inconsistent.

And he didn't contemplate it. To begin with, he had no wish to fall in love with any one; to proceed—but the beginning was enough! Now he did dwell on the fact that he had met her for the first time only the previous day, and, with sudden discomfiture, he wondered if he was appearing a romantic ass to her. He had the true Englishman's horror of being thought romantic. Undeniably he had exposed himself to the charge—distancing by leagues his Cousin Charlie, who had

blundered more from idle good nature than anything else! Was she laughing in her sleeve at him?

The question was drowned in swift remembrance of her persistent refusal to take advantage of his offer, in swift remembrance of words, looks, intonations that gave the lie to suspicion. The average woman, cognizant of all the circumstances, would have told him that the refusal of his money was artfulness, not rectitude; but Ralph, being only the average man, did not think of that. He felt, on the contrary, so penitent and guilty for having wronged her momentarily, that the sentiment of his mood was redoubled, and all the while that the bus was bearing him to Victoria he was mentally traveling to Kennington in a tram.

His speedy return much relieved his parents, and when he responded to their inquiries by an account of what had happened, it surprised him to find that they listened to the narrative without any interpolated abuse of Miss Thorpe. It was soon evident that their umbrage was now engrossed by the Bartons, by Alice chiefly, and in their cordial detestation of their nephew's wife, they were disposed to take a careless, and even lenient, view of the other woman.

Meanwhile Irene had spent her penny and reached the stage-door—and she knew enough of the theatrical profession to be nervously aware that there's many a slip 'twixt the offer and the salary.

CHAPTER X.

What she did not know was that Gresham Fair had welcomed a legitimate excuse for getting rid of his present leading lady. She had been engaged at the urgent solicitations of a friend of hers, who "had money in the tour," but when it was generally agreed that she "hadn't enough experience for the part," the friend, in his own interests, had consented to its being withdrawn. She declared in the wings that "her physician had ordered her South," and the company, who grasped the facts with perfect accuracy, pretended to believe her.

Fair, who had remained impressionable—and asserted that he was only thirty-three—had telegraphed to the agent for Irene's address, blithely; he had been eager to see her again. He was, as he himself expressed it, "gone" on Miss Thorpe, and the labors of Lloyd in the matter of procuring the engagement for her had consisted of reading the telegram, and dictating a line to her at the Sydenham post-office.

Irene asked the doorkeeper to let Mr. Fair know that she was there, and waited anxiously for the managerial reply.

"Will you come down, miss?"

The flare of the wings again! She had thought never to see it any more. Gresham Fair stood waiting to go on in the river scene, and bore the faultless appearance which makes the boating-man of the theater so far superior to the boating-man of the Thames. The immaculate trousers, the elegant shirt, the jacket hanging gracefully over his left shoulder looked, at close quarters, as false as the punt on castors and the canvas water.

"My dear lady!" he exclaimed, bowing deeply. He would have swept off his straw hat, but it had been poised to show a wave of chestnut hair.

Though he had made it clear that he admired her during the previous tour, she had never supposed that his admiration had survived a six months' interval. Nor was she inclined to place too much reliance in the homage of his greeting, which, as likely as not, might be a prelude to an expression of regret that he had put her to the trouble of calling to no purpose. Her relief, therefore, was intense when he added: "This is capital. I was so afraid you mightn't be free!"

"I had Mr. Lloyd's letter to-day," she murmured.

"Yes. I suppose he made everything plain? Three pounds. If that's all right, I shall be delighted to see you back."

"You didn't think of me when you were making up the company, though!" she laughed.

"Didn't think of you?" cried Fair reproachfully. "I thought of you the very first thing. I looked through the *Era* and the *Stage*, and I couldn't find your address—and Lloyd didn't seem to know where you were. I was awfully wild not to be able to get you! Well"—he smiled the debonair smile of winning candor which always fascinated the ladies in the audience—"it's all right now! You'll be able to go on to-morrow night, I suppose? You'd better take the part with you, and we'll run through the lines in the morning."

"Mr. Fair, sir!" said the call-boy warningly. And, with another salutation, he strolled to the left upper entrance, in readiness for his cue.

Engaged! She thanked God. She asked the prompter for the part, to refresh her memory of it before she went to the rehearsal in the morning, and there was some delay before it was forthcoming, as there generally is in such circumstances; and after it was discovered and he had blamed everybody but himself, she made her way to the ladies' dressing-rooms.

The girl from whom she hoped to succeed in borrowing necessaries for the night was a Miss Phœbe Tilton; and the name of "Miss Phœbe Tilton" was discerned presently, penciled among other names upon a scrap of paper on one of the doors. The young lady was found frantically "making a change"—in other words, she was transforming herself, with little time for the metamorphosis, from a waiting-maid to a lady of fashion. Her hearty, if hurried, welcome over, she proceeded with her toilet to an accompaniment of execrations upon "the profession" and all connected with it.

"Worse than ever, my dear!" she exclaimed. "In this tour, I'm the servant at the beginning, the Duchess of Something—with two words to speak—in the regatta scene, a vagrant on the Embankment, and a Chinese in the opium-den. I'm perfectly dead by the time the curtain comes down!" She thrust her head into a golden wig, and dusted her face with a powder-puff. "I meant

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to tell Fair I couldn't stand it—it's simply abominable, making a girl play four parts for one salary! I screwed up my courage and went to him. He pretended not to understand; he pretended to think I was dissatisfied with my performance! He said: 'What, an artist complaining about herself when she contents the management? Nonsense, my dear child; you characterize all the parts admirably, admirably. I've nothing but praise for you!' I was so taken aback that I went away mumbling thanks to him!" She turned breathlessly to the dresser. "Gimme my sunshade, and get a move on you, do!" She grabbed a Japanese parasol, stuck out her feet, for her shoes to be buttoned, caught up some bangles, to be put on during her flight to the wings, and darted from the room.

However, on her return, the change from the duchess to the vagrant proved to be less frenzied, and it was now possible for Irene to beg the loan of the essential articles, and for Miss Tilton to explain that she couldn't inconvenience her.

"My dear, I've only one brush and comb in the world besides the things I use at the show—these'd be no good to you! Think I'm royalty? Where are you staying?"

"I haven't got any rooms at all yet," said Irene.

"Not got 'em? Well, I tell you what—why not take a bedroom where *I* am? It's quite close to here—Kennington Road. Then you can use my things in the morning. And we can share the sitting-room—it'll come out cheaper for both of us. If you wait till the show is over, we'll go together."

The suggestion disposed of the difficulty, and was desirable in many ways. Irene undertook to wait gladly enough, and, averse to intruding upon the other women in the dressing-room, went to the box-office and asked for a stall.

Often as she had played in the piece, it was the first time that she had seen it from the auditorium, and the experi-

ence was a curious one to her. Phoebe Tilton, as the outcast, was queerly unlike the Phoebe Tilton whom she had just left, and when the heroine staggered, despairing, against Cleopatra's Needle, which wobbled ominously, the actress in the front made a mental note not to stagger so close to it herself.

There was a peculiar interest in witnessing from the stalls the claptrap that was so familiar to her from "behind." It wasn't that she knew what was going to happen—any playgoer who had seen the drama before knew that—it was that she seemed to be on both sides of the curtain simultaneously. While the snow was falling on the Embankment, her mind's eye saw, through the back cloth, the scene-hands, in their shirt-sleeves, wheeling the porch of the Old Home into readiness for the next set; and, after Gresham Fair had dived heroically to the leading lady's rescue, she had a mental view of him hidden on a mattress, with a tankard of stout at his lips. Almost she could smell stout, as she had done every night when she reappeared, lopping over his shoulder in the lime-light, to salvos of applause.

The Old Home, with the Virginia creeper round the porch, was duly presented; the peal of wedding-bells, to which the faithful horsekeeper—who remembered the dear young master when he was a boy, bless his heart!—tripped jubilantly to listen on the right-hand side of the stage, were, as usual, sounded by the prompter on the left of it; and Gresham Fair, as a radiant bridegroom, declaimed to the lady who was making her last appearance in his company, that "in the golden years before them they would never part again."

Irene rose, and went back to the alley in which the stage-door was concealed. She had not long to wait, and the two girls proceeded cheerfully to a humble street, in which cards announcing "Apartments, Furnished" were visible in all the fanlights. Miss Tilton opened one of the doors with a latchkey, and, going to the top of the basement stairs, called loudly for "Ma."

Irene had been in the profession too long to imagine that it signified any relationship.

"Ma, Miss Thorpe wants a room for the rest of the week—she has just joined the crowd—let's see what you've got! Oh! Is there enough supper for us both?"

"Well, I was heating up what's left of the rabbit for you, my dear," said the tousled landlady. "I dare say you can make it do, with the cheese. Will you step up-stairs, miss? There's a nice room you could have till Sunday—you'll be traveling o' Sunday, I suppose? I've just let it for Sunday to a lady in next week's crowd, coming from Leicester."

"Where do we go next week, Phœbe?"

"Princess', Brixton. Sunday's all right. Cut along up and have a look at it, and then we'll have supper."

They supped in a shabby little parlor, papered a bilious brown, hung with screaming oleographs in tarnished gilt frames, and loaded with the ornaments which the grocers that present such things with packets of tasteless tea describe as "'andsome vauses.'" But the fire was bright, and there was the invitation of an armchair and a couch when supper was done. What if these were of the preposterous Victorian form to which the cheap British furniture-maker mindlessly clings, that the armchair seemed deliberately constructed to prevent its occupant leaning back, and that a projection of fancy woodwork had been planned to assault her neck; what if the couch, to be reposeful, required her to possess a spine with as many curves as a corkscrew? To Irene the parlor was a haven of rest—she had a right here! The thought was, in itself, uplifting. And on Saturday she would be able to send a posted order for a pound to Mr. Barton, and to write to Ralph Hollingsworth, when she repaid him for forwarding her trunk.

A profound thankfulness pervaded her as she saw pictures in the fire. To be assured of a living for so lengthy a period as twelve weeks gives to the

average actress a sense of security, a spirit of independence, incredible to those associated with callings less precarious. Twelve weeks! She did not seek to look beyond it, to penetrate the mists of the far future. Twelve weeks! Would it not, for an actress, have been rank ingratitude to question: "What of the thirteenth?"

But the pictures in the fire showed her a man's profile, and her mind floated to scenes of the afternoon, and she did question whether she would meet the man any more.

"Don't you care to talk, Irene?"

"Somehow, Phœbe, I don't."

The crumpled, coffee-stained part lay on the table-cloth, reminding her that the rehearsal had been fixed for noon next day, and that she had meant to read the pages before she went to bed. She did not want to read them, she did not want to withdraw her gaze from the glow in the grate, where the profile still allured. Miss Thorpe sat remembering Ralph; and Mr. Fair looked forward to the society of Miss Thorpe; and Ralph Hollingsworth was determining to think no more of her.

CHAPTER XI.

And if any of the Sydenham young ladies—or, for that matter, if any young lady in any other highly respectable neighborhood—had been aware of the facts, she would have had every right to demand indignantly where the Moral came in, that Miss Thorpe should perturb Ralph's reflections with so much more insistence than any "nice girl" with whom his acquaintance had been equally brief. For undeniably Irene's influence was due, not to time, but to circumstances, and the circumstances, as a whole, had been vastly to her discredit. It was vain for him to repeat that she was a stranger to him; the ice of formality had been broken at the onset, and they had swum together in such deep waters that she seemed to him a far more intimate personality than many women whom he had known for years. Only by a strong effort of

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will during the next few evenings was he able to resist the temptation to go to Kennington to witness her performance—and on Saturday night, when he received a grateful note from her, in discharging her trumpery debt, he violently regretted his success.

He regretted it because the company's week at Kennington had now expired, and she made no mention of the place to which she was going next. For aught he knew, she might be bound for Scotland, or Ireland, or any of a hundred towns inconveniently distant from Sydenham. He realized that he was proposing to see her wherever she might be, and said that he had been a fool to deny himself the pleasure at Kennington, which was comparatively adjacent. His knowledge of her profession was too slight to prompt him to any other course than consulting the theatrical columns of the daily papers, and, as those at which he looked contained advertisements of the principal houses only, he remained, over Sunday, ignorant that she was still in London.

On Monday he consulted a local news agent instead, and, provided with a copy of the *Era*, he found difficulties dispersed. Although she did not figure in the lists of actresses who announced their whereabouts, he learned that "A Man in a Million" was at the Princess' Theater, Brixton. The information was uncommonly welcome. He dined in town, and paid for a stall at the suburban Princess' soon after the doors opened; and, though there was nothing remarkable in its being there, the sight of her name in the program interested him so much that his gaze kept reverting to its fascination.

Given a man in this mood, a seat in a theater, and the girl in the piece, and—unless she is a very bad actress, indeed—the result is a foregone conclusion. When the orchestra played "God Save the King," Ralph was in love, and knew it. Never mind the plot, never mind the rest of the company, never mind how absurd were some of the lines! So far as she was concerned, he was at one with the audience, who had yielded to the spell, and to him the spell

of the actress was the stronger because he knew the woman.

He had intended to do no more than see her act, but now he asked himself why he shouldn't see her when she left. Directed to the artists' entrance, he sent down his card to her, and, after his messenger returned with a request that he would wait, he waited in the draft most willingly.

"How do you do, Mr. Hollingsworth?"

"How do you do, Miss Thorpe?"

They clasped hands under the stage-door lamp, where the rheumatic door-keeper turned a surly face through the little window of his shelter, and humble nondescripts made, yawning, for their homes. "Under the stage-door lamp!" It might serve as the title for a series. And if the writer knew the truth, the lamp would throw a light on many scenes of virtuous devotion, on many lives misjudged. The moneyed men who wait under the stage-door lamp are not all libertines; the dancing girls who pass beneath it are not all Circes. The stage-door lamp shines on love as pure as does the harvest moon.

"Have you been in front?" she asked.

"Yes. I thought you were very good."

"Really?" She looked delighted. "What do you think of the play?"

"It isn't a masterpiece."

"Awful, isn't it! How did you like Fair?"

"Posturing idiot!" he said. "Why does he always take his hat off when he says: 'It's false!'"

"Oh, that helps the round, you see."

"Pardon me. I don't see. What 'round'?"

"The round of applause. It sends the line home—to the back of the gallery. 'It's false,' with a sweep of the hat, goes ten times as well as 'It's false' naturally. Of course, he knows better; he wouldn't do it up West. Outside the West End one's obliged to go in for that sort of thing; the audience looks for it. Oh, did you see Miss Collinford's frame on the walls? It's the funniest thing you ever saw in your life."

"No. Who's Miss Collinford?"

"She's the woman who plays the virago—the wretch in the opium-den. There are two photographs of her in the frame. In one of them she's being brutal, in the part, and in the other she's smirking in cheap finery, with lumping bracelets on her leg-of-mutton arms, to show how refined she is in private life. It's a puzzle to decide which way she looks commoner."

He laughed. "I gather that you don't like Miss Collinford?"

"Oh, she means to be amiable. Miss Tilton is my chum."

"What does *she* play?"

"How funny it is that people in front never seem to read their programs! Miss Tilton is down as the Chinese woman, but she 'doubles' no end of small parts. She and I are going to share rooms all the tour."

"I'm glad you've a friend in the company; it must be much jollier for you than living alone. Are you in town next week, too?"

"No, we go to Leicester; we're in the provinces all the time after this week. Leicester, Northampton—I think we go as far north as Newcastle. When do you go back to Paris?"

"I expect I'll go back in a few days. You don't come to Paris, I suppose?"

"No; Paris is *not* among our 'dates.' I must wait for that till I'm a swell in a fashionable crowd."

"Perhaps one day I shall see you advertised to do an 'English season' there?"

"And say, 'Irene Thorpe? Irene Thorpe? I seem to know that name!'"

"Ah!" he said gruffly. "It's more likely to be that Miss Thorpe doesn't remember who 'Ralph Hollingsworth' is when his card's sent in."

"I hope I'm not taking you too far out of your way?" she inquired, after a slight pause.

"I'd like to walk as far as the house with you, if you'll let me. I'm afraid I sha'n't get a chance to come out here again before I go, and this'll be au revoir for rather a long time." He hesitated. "You know what I want to say?"

If I can ever be of any use to you—
It sounds like a man in a novel."

"It didn't strike me so," said the girl.

"I meant it very sincerely, at all events. If I can ever be of any use to you, I hope you'll tell me. I can promise that I'll do whatever you ask me for, if it's in my power."

"It's ever so good of you," she answered.

"Well, I never said that to any one else. I'll give you an address in a minute. A line there will always reach me. Even if I'm away, it'll be sent on."

"Thank you."

"But you won't write?"

"How do you mean?"

"If you were in trouble, you wouldn't think of me?"

"Indeed I should!" she affirmed.

"Well, 'think of me,' perhaps; but you wouldn't ask me to help you? Would you?"

"I am as grateful to you," she said unsteadily, "as any woman has ever been to any man in this world. It's curious—"

"What?"

"I oughtn't to say it. Oh, I don't know! It's curious I'm more grateful to you than to your cousin. I suppose I don't think of his help so gratefully as I ought because of what it led to. That's hateful of me! Mrs. Barton and he have quite made it up?"

"Oh, quite! I had a letter from him a day or two ago. Yes, you ought to feel a good deal more grateful to Charlie than to me. I haven't done anything for you! Still, I can't be sorry that you don't."

It was in his mind all the while to beg her to go to luncheon with him somewhere one morning before he left England, but between acknowledging that one is in love and approving the condition there is a difference. This evening he had indulged himself—tomorrow he must again be wise, he said. But the quarter of an hour was pretty, sentiment idealized the Brixton Road, and he was in no hurry for the lodging to be reached.

It was reached discomfitingly soon. She paused at a dirty door-step, while he wrote with laborious legibility on a leaf of his note-book.

"I can't ask you in," she murmured. "The woman wouldn't like it."

"Oh, I know," he said. "I understand."

"I hope you'll be immensely successful and do something big—not in size, in reputation."

"I'll have a shot at it. There's the address. Mind you don't forget that I meant what I said."

"Thanks. I sha'n't forget." She put the paper carefully in her purse.

"Well, I won't keep you standing still in the cold!" His hand met hers. "Good-by."

"Do you remember your way back to the station?"

"Oh, I dare say I shall find it, all right."

"Well, good-by. When you get to the end of the street, you turn to the left."

"To the left?" he said, lingering.

"Y-e-s."

"Oh, I dare say I shall find it, all right," he repeated.

"It isn't far."

"No. Do you know, I've an idea you'll get on? You're miles too good for this sort of thing."

"That's nice of you."

"Lots of luck, anyhow!"

"Lots of luck to the pictures!"

"Good-by."

"Good-by," she said gravely.

Once an artist who loved a girl wisely parted from her in much this way, determined never to see her any more. He fought with longing for three infernal years—and then longing thrashed him, and he traveled to meet the girl again. But he could meet only the mournful woman to whom pain had changed her, and their meeting was more piteous to him than their separation.

Ralph Hollingsworth had known that artist, and he wandered past Electric Avenue reflecting that one is better off never to withstand temptation than to withstand it, and succumb too late.

CHAPTER XII.

Gresham Fair did not neglect his opportunities. He had long inclined toward matrimony, and, moreover, held the opinion that he would do well to marry a girl in his own profession. None of the girls he had met had ever attracted him so strongly as did Miss Thorpe, and now that she was back in his company, he began to think seriously of making her his wife.

That, from a worldly point of view, he would be throwing himself away, he frankly admitted in his meditations. It would, of course, be a stupendous piece of luck for an actress earning three pounds a week to marry her manager; a manager who was financially sound and had prospects which might eventually open stage-doors in the West End to him. Nevertheless, the main thing to consider was the question of his own happiness, and he was more convinced every day that Irene was the girl to suit him.

His reflections did not progress to this point without the lady finding that the situation called for all her tact. His attentions were undesired, but, as he was her manager, she could not prudently give him the cold shoulder. For instance, he talked to her continuously during many of the waits every evening, and, though she sought the refuge of her dressing-room as often as she dared, she could not shun the wings with a persistence that would excite remark. Then, too, he was frequently suggesting little excursions, and, while she discovered excuses for evading three out of four of them, she was unable, without inflicting the snub direct, to evade them all.

Fair, attributing her reserve to coquetry, was far from being repelled by it as yet; but should she be obliged to reject his advances definitely, she was conscious that the wound to his self-esteem might render it difficult for her to retain her engagement.

When the piece had been out about a month, it appeared to her that to decline all his invitations was, on the whole, a lesser danger than to precipi-

tate the crisis. Accordingly, he was much chagrined, at Leamington, to hear that she had no wish to admire the neighboring castle by moonlight.

"It would be such a cold drive," she objected. "We should freeze to death."

"I don't know a finer view in England on a clear, frosty night," urged Fair, who had never seen it. "Of course, you should have a rug. *I'd* take care you didn't catch cold. I don't want my leading lady to be out of the bill! Say you'll go! I've been looking forward all the tour to taking you."

It is a predicament for a girl when she cannot refuse to occupy a false position without jeopardizing her bread and butter. Irene temporized. She said, smiling, that she would "think about it." They had met in the streets, as they so often did, unless she avoided the chief thoroughfares altogether, and when she had escaped from him at last, on the plea of having "things to buy," she resolved to make another attempt to cultivate a taste for exercise in Phoebe Tilton. But she was not sanguine of success.

Phoebe Tilton had a marked aversion to taking walks. A saunter to the theater—which she called the "show box"—to ascertain if there were any letters for her, was as much pedestrianism as commanded itself to her in the morning. In the afternoon she slept on the sofa. And in the evening she went again to the theater and back. The leading lady's efforts to secure her as a companion out of doors proved wholly unavailing—and meanwhile Fair was becoming impatient.

Although he would have much preferred a romantic setting for his love-scene, it began to seem to him that he would have to avow his sentiments in a High Street, or in the wings, and he was at the point of reconciling himself to this descent when he happened to hear that Irene and Miss Tilton had been disappointed in their endeavor to arrange for lodgings in the town which the company was to visit next. The landlady to whom they had written was no longer there, and as their letter

was not returned, marked "Gone Away," until very late in the week, they would be compelled to seek accommodation personally when they arrived. This gave him an idea, and he immediately offered to Irene the lodgings that he had booked for himself.

"But then *you'd* have no rooms," she demurred. "It's very kind of you, but I wouldn't dream of such a thing."

"Well, as a matter of fact," he said, "you'd be doing me rather a favor. 'The Audacity of Dinah' will be at the other theater, and I've got some business on with the man who's running the tour. I'd like to put up at the same place that *he* does, and see as much of him as I can. If you don't mind—"

"Oh, I don't mind, of course. Naturally, we should be delighted to settle ahead in the usual way; only I don't want to put you to any trouble. Besides— What about terms? I expect your rooms would be too expensive for us?"

"Those I've taken this time are wonderfully cheap—a sitting-room and a bedroom for thirteen shillings. I've never come across such terms before."

"I have," she said, laughing; "often! But there's Miss Tilton—will there be another room in the house for *her*, I wonder?"

"No, I'm sorry to say there won't; you'd have to separate for the week. I suppose that wouldn't be important, though?"

"Well, I don't know," she replied; "it'd be rather mean of me to leave Phoebe out in the cold. I think I'd rather look round for diggings with her, as I meant to do."

"Just as you please!" He was evidently hurt. "I shall have to pay for the rooms, though I sha'n't go into them, that's all. I took them, and I can't let the woman suffer because I've changed my mind. Still, thirteen shillings isn't a fortune! Do as you like."

She could not, without open incivility, say she would do anything but convenience him, especially as it was between the acts that the discussion took place; and Phoebe, who joined them, kept telling her insistently "not to be a

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duffer." But she was perfectly conscious that by installing herself in apartments alone, she had blundered badly in the duel of wits.

If the rooms had been let to Fair for thirteen shillings a week, he had been offered a remarkable bargain! That was her first thought, as she sat down, on Sunday, to a well-cooked little dinner, served by a trim maid servant. And, not being a schoolgirl, she dismissed his statement as a falsehood. She realized that he had mentioned a figure adapted to her salary, and meant to defray the difference, privately, out of his own purse.

And why this burst of liberality? That he might provide himself with a chance to call upon her! Hitherto he had not done so, deterred by the presence of Phoebe. Now, when he came, there would be no one in the way. He would come, and he would ask her to marry him. Of that she had no doubt.

Irene leaned her face on her palms, and forgot the apple-tart. Her experiences had made her older than her age. She had suffered privations; had pleaded to a stranger, on the pavements, for assistance; had endured contempt and expulsion. Her life had battered illusions out of her. She knew that there were disgraceful actions that the world held scandalous, and disgraceful actions that the world approved. A girl must not beg of a man for food, but she might marry a man for money. She must not trick a hostess in order to gain a home for a few days; but she might sham tenderness for a suitor in order to gain a home as long as she lived. It was, in fact, entirely clear to her that, if she sold herself to Gresham Fair—by contract, of course—people would show her considerably more deference than she was ever likely to earn by her unaided exertions.

The stage no longer allured her, but no other vocation seemed attainable, and if the stage must be her destiny, she recognized that a career as Fair's wife would be a triumphal procession compared with the obstacle-race in which she must engage alone. True, the triumphs would be very limited—of his

financial prospects she knew nothing—the plays would be mostly rubbish, and the theaters would be mostly of small account. But she would have a voice in selecting the plays, and in the theaters where they appeared she would be a personage. And again and again her anxieties would be over. No more consternation when a tour concluded; no more rebuffs in the agents' offices; no more impending terror of starvation!

Yes; she looked the advantages squarely in the eyes, and she did not pay herself the compliment of asserting positively that she would have refused Fair even if she had not met Ralph Hollingsworth. Only, having met him, she knew that she liked him too much to accept anybody else as yet. She made no exalted protestations as to the future. She did not vow, across the apple-tart, as she vowed across the footlights, that "never, never could she care for any one but him!" and she fully expected that the interest he had shown in her would fade under the test of absence. But, whatever time might effect, she knew that, here and now, she thought of him too often to permit her to tolerate the embraces of another man.

Thus capriciously does Fate dispense the opportunities, for there wasn't another unmarried woman in the company who would not have jumped at the chance with both feet.

Fair called the next afternoon, ostensibly to inquire if she found the apartments comfortable. Assured on this point, he diverged into monetary details of the tour, into allusions to his plans for the spring. He did not, of course, deem it essential to demonstrate that he was a man of consequence, but the dramatic instinct prompted him to a prologue around his prosperity, in order to intensify the situation of his proposing to her. He felt as if he were playing King Cophetua, as he rose, and, standing in the center of the hearth-rug, said impressively:

"But enough of trifles! My reason for coming here to-day was twofold. Miss Thorpe, Irene, you can't be blind to the emotions you have inspired in

me. I love you! I have come to ask you to be my wife!"

She murmured: "Oh!" and there was an awkward pause, in which he felt that she was failing in the part he had assigned to her.

"Irene!"

"I needn't tell you that I—that you pay me a very high compliment——"

Now she was coming to the cues that he had anticipated. He interrupted winningly. "Tell me only that you love me!"

"But I'm awfully sorry. I value your friendship so much," she went on. "But I can't marry you."

"Why not?" His tone was suddenly colloquial, even sharp.

"I've never thought of you like that."

"You must have seen?"

"I mean my own feeling is just friendship, and no more. I hoped you wouldn't say it."

He stared at her blankly, amazed, resentful. "Do you understand?" he exclaimed. "You'll be a manageress! Why, God bless my soul, you—you can't have considered! And I shall come into a lot of money; my governor's got a big shop in Sheffield. I shall play in London, and so would you—we could take a theater. Do you know what you're throwing away? Irene——" He made a movement to clasp her to him. She drew back. And, after a moment of discomfiture, he added:

"I wouldn't want all the fat—I'm not that sort—you should have jolly fine parts."

"Oh, I'm quite sure you'd be generous. I'm not doubting that."

"Well, then? Your parts shall be as good as mine. There! I'll star you for all you're worth. Look here, if a play hasn't got a part you're keen on, I'll chuck it. I take my oath I will! What more can I say?"

"Nothing." She was moved. "Nothing," she repeated gently, "excepting that you won't be angry with me. I can't marry you, but I admire what you've said so much that it'd cut me up to think I was going to lose a friend as well as a good husband.

You've said things to me that I shall never forget; things that any girl might be proud to hear."

"Won't you think it over?" he urged.

"It'd make no difference. It wouldn't be fair to you if I said I'd 'think it over.'"

"Well!" He took up his hat. "One lives and learns! Of course, the fact of the matter is, you're mashed on another chap!"

"You have no right to say so!" she cried angrily.

"What else can it be? Great Scott! Why, well-known girls in the West End would snap at me—and a girl in my own crowd gives me the giddy push!"

"Won't you believe that a girl may respect a man too much to marry him if she doesn't love him? Don't you think the honor you have paid me deserves a better reward than for me to accept you, feeling as I do?"

She said it earnestly, but she was respecting him far less than she had done a minute since, and perhaps he realized it. The words bore no salve for his wound. When he had begged her again to consider before she answered definitely, and she had again declared her answer to be final, he bade her a sulky good day.

CHAPTER XIII.

And he treated her with chilling dignity during the evening, or tried to do so—it is difficult for the underbred to behave with chilling dignity, they only succeed in being rude. The chivalry of his bearing toward her on the stage, and the resentment with which he turned his back on her in the wings, formed a contrast that would have startled a spectator unused to the anomalies of theatrical life. It even caused comment in the company, and only a few days had passed when she found herself interrogated on the subject.

"What's up?" demanded Phoebe Tilton. "You don't mean to tell me Fair has popped the question and you've refused him?"

"No, I don't," said the girl. It was one of the last things she meant to tell anybody.

"Well, that's what every one's saying, my dear."

"Then you'd better advise every one not to talk such rubbish," said Irene hotly, "or there'll be some fortnight's notices flying about; if Fair heard of it, he'd be in no end of a rage!"

But her friend looked unconvinced, and very soon the manager's umbrage was so conspicuous that she began to tremble in the thought that the "fortnight's notice" might be given to herself. The menace of catastrophe was in the air. It was in the writing on the doors. Though it had very seldom been practicable for her to have a dressing-room to herself, she had always, as the leading lady, had the best one after Fair's, and never more than two of the other "principals" had shared it with her. Suddenly the professional etiquette was defied. One week, the lists on the doors decreed that the leading lady should dress in a room which had been deliberately chosen to put her to inconvenience; the week following, she was provided with a better room, but her companions in it were women who played small parts.

Such slights as these, trivial as they appear to the uninitiated, were highly significant; indeed, it was perfectly within her rights to make a formal protest. She did not do so because she couldn't afford it. To complain would be to furnish Fair with the excuse which he was plainly seeking. "Since you're so difficult to satisfy, it would be best if you gave up the part!" She said nothing. But she bought the theatrical papers and studied the "Wanted" columns anxiously, and, between her and Phoebe Tilton, with whom she was living again, it was understood that she had no intention of remaining till the end of the tour if she could obtain another engagement sooner.

Now the absorbing question to her mind was, from which side would the notice come? Would she succeed in her efforts and tender her resignation, or would Fair's ill humor culminate in

her dismissal? Her chance of success, feeble though it was, was increased by the fact that she wasn't disengaged, for, though it is never an easy matter for an actress to secure work, it is a shade less difficult when she can assert that at present she has some. There is no reason, that bears analysis, why this should be, but so it is.

She wrote for almost every vacancy that was announced. To play lead was, of course, desirable, but her chief aim was to leave Gresham Fair without the indignity of being discharged; so she applied as "Strong Character Actress (tall)," and "Smart Juvenile Lady (petite)," and "Useful Lady (to complete company)"—as practically everything except a "Pathetic Child Actress (accustomed to dying)," and a "Colored Songstress." Enjoined by the advertisements to "state absolutely lowest," she stated terms that were abject; commanded to forward "photos & refs." she sent the most flattering of her likenesses, and referred to the most prominent of the managers by whom she was known. However, it is understood, in such cases, that "Silence is a polite negative," and despite the variety of her endeavors, and the stamps that she enclosed for her likenesses to be returned, it was the only politeness she received.

Then the blow fell. Salaries were always paid by the business manager on Saturday morning—and in Salford, on Saturday morning when she went to the theater to draw her three pounds, he told her that her services were required for only two weeks longer.

"You're not suited to the part, Miss Thorpe; Mr. Fair has made up his mind to put it into other hands."

Fair had won. Thanks to the economies she had practised, she had a few pounds saved, but she was choking with mortification. Her throat was tight, and her eyes burned, as she went back to her rooms, to compose more letters. Phoebe Tilton heard the news ten minutes later, and cried, and hugged her. It was a typical picture of "the profession"—the hideous little lodging, the penny packet of stationery, and the *Era*

on the table; one girl in tears, and the other wretchedly writing her name and next week's address at the back of her triumphal portrait.

At the same moment, in Paris, Ralph Hollingsworth, searching the current issue of the *Stage*, found that her next week's address would be "Grand Theater, Wigan." He had thought of her hourly; had decided to go to her; wanted to be talking to her here and now!

To the longing that had mastered him, it was maddening that the morrow would be Sunday and there would be no performance; ignorant where she was to stay in Wigan, he might be unable to see her until Monday evening. He cursed himself for not having made up his mind the previous day instead, and scowled at the canvases on the walls savagely.

Could he reach the town in advance of the company and meet her on her arrival? It was the only way! But at what time was the company due; and how long would it take him to get from London to Wigan? He didn't know; but he did know that on Sunday there was likely to be an infrequent service of trains.

He must consider calmly. If he crossed from Havre, he should be in London next morning a little after ten o'clock. It might be too late; the first train might have gone, and he might have hours to wait before there was another. What about Dieppe-and-Newhaven? If he made no mistake, one got to London by that route two hours and a half earlier.

Happy thought! He crossed from Dieppe, and, though he had much more time than he needed to catch the ten a. m. from Euston, his choice proved to have been the right one.

In Wigan at last, he learned that "A Man in a Million" company had not got in yet, and a tip produced the further information that it was expected at five-fifteen. In the brief interval he sought an hotel, much exhilarated.

And if his exhilaration subsided somewhat under the influence of Wigan's aspect, if its gray streets de-

pressed him, and the eyes of its people made his heart ache, he, nevertheless, strode back sooner than was necessary. With a cigar between his teeth, and his hands in the pockets of the shabby ulster, he saw pleasant visions as he loitered in the railway-station.

The train was late. He kept glancing at his watch, and his steps were quicker and impatient. Now the train was signaled. He smoked feverishly, and stood still, his gaze fixed on the spot where it would appear. It glided into sight—slowed—and stopped. His cigar was tossed away. A medley of men and girls and baskets issued from compartments that were labeled with the drama's name. From the posse of the meaningless, *her* face flashed out on him. He sped to greet her before she could reach a cab. Her exclamation alone was worth his journey. She was laughing; was presenting him gaily to a Miss — The name he did not catch. He was opening the cab-door. He was sitting in the cab opposite them both. She was saying that he "must come in with them and have some tea." Wigan was the prettiest place on the globe!

He found it charming around the fire, charming to be for the first time her guest—the more so because she showed him none of the conventional attentions of a hostess. They were in Bohemia, and she had too much sense to embarrass him by offering excuses for the rough-and-tumble service, or to apologize because there wasn't enough toast, or to forbid him going down on his knees and making some more.

"More butter, Miss Tilton?" He had her name now.

"Yes, please. How did you learn to do it so well? Your toast's as good as a girl's. I say, that sounds like a song. 'His toast was as good as a girl's!'"

"Better than these girls!" laughed Irene. "We didn't mean to set you to work when we brought you in. You do believe us, don't you?"

"I'm quite content with the arrangement," he said. "I should say I'm having as festive a time as anybody in Wigan!"

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"It's a cheerful spot, isn't it?" said Phoebe. "Is this the first time you've been here?"

"Yes. I was in luck to find 'A Man in a Million' here."

"It was a lucky chance for us, too," she responded discreetly, not for an instant imagining that it was "chance" at all.

"Where do you go next week?" he asked, turning to Irene.

"To Bolton," she said; "another joyous thing in places!"

"And after that?"

"What?" She didn't want him to know she was in trouble again. Upstairs she had warned Phoebe not to mention the matter.

"Where do you go after Bolton?"

"I go to London then."

"Is that so?" he exclaimed. "I thought the piece wasn't going to London again all the tour! What theater will you be at?"

It couldn't be helped. "I'm leaving the company," she owned. "They don't think I'm strong enough for the part."

"Oh!" He realized that he had pestered her for the reply, and was contrite. "I'm awfully sorry, that's hard lines. They aren't likely to get anybody to play it better; you're jolly good!"

Phoebe Tilton sat dumb with dismay. Why Irene should elect to pose as an incompetent actress, instead of saying candidly: "It's just Fair's spite," passed the bounds of comprehension. Even if she had really proved incompetent, it would be amazingly foolish to confess it; considering the circumstances, it was— Miss Tilton poked the fire violently to relieve her feelings.

So it happened that Ralph learned, on the first afternoon, that the girl was trying to find another engagement; and since she had been unable to suppress the fact, there was no reason why he shouldn't see the advertisements that she answered. Sometimes they collaborated in the answers. He became, during the next few days, a constant visitor and a regular playgoer; and in the morning they often sat at the table together discussing how much a week

they should demand. Holding a high opinion of her talent, he usually persuaded her, with exceeding rashness, to increase her terms by ten shillings a week; and when he heard that the captivating photographs—all of which he would have liked for himself—were never likely to be seen again, his indignation was prodigious.

He might have conducted the business of these conferences in a manner less commercial still if Miss Tilton hadn't been present. And Miss Tilton, who, to foster the romance, would willingly have sat in her cold bedroom, or even have taken a walk, was furious with her friend for ordaining that she was to remain in the parlor.

"The man must loathe the sight of me!" she objected once. "I've got feelings; it's a most uncomfortable sensation to be loathed. For goodness' sake, let me go to bed and give him a chance to propose to you!"

"Don't be an idiot," said Irene. "He doesn't want to propose to me. And if he did, I couldn't marry him."

"Why not? Seems to me the summit of your earthly ambition is to die a spinster!"

"Why does a girl generally refuse to marry a man?"

"Because she isn't fond of him; and that's like the flowers that bloom in the spring—it has nothing to do with the case. You're every bit as much in love with him as he is with you. Think I'm blind? It's as plain as a poster."

"Well, nothing will come of it, any-how," declared Irene. "I've been thinking things over. I've been thinking hard. I haven't a right to marry him, Phoebe. That's why I don't want him to ask me. If he did, I mightn't have the strength to say 'No.' And afterward he'd be sorry, because I—I once behaved very badly to his people, and he'll always remember it."

"The remembrance doesn't seem to upset him much, does it?"

"It'd upset him if I were his wife. My dear, I'd give anything in the world to be able to undo what I did! But I can't. And he mustn't be here so often. It has to stop, it's all wrong!"

On the strength of which confidence, Phoebe Tilton privately determined to leave them together the next time he came.

And the next time he came Irene had found an engagement.

"For 'Mabel, Go And Put On Your Hat!'" she cried. "And at my own terms, or, rather, yours! You brought me luck. Where's the letter, Phoebe?"

She picked it off the mantelpiece, and he read it to an accompaniment of the girls' chatter. It was a lovely part; they had seen the piece in the West End; to get three pounds a week in a thing like that was ever so much jollier than getting it with Fair. Fair would be mad when he heard that she had done so well.

And after he had been congratulant, and interrogative, and the conversation was calmer—Phoebe flitted. He had no idea that the flitting was mutinous; he had not seen the glance that forbade, or the glance that defied. Man, the obtuse, understood only that she "had to send a telegram to her aunt." But he thanked Heaven she was a niece.

"You can't think what a change it will be," continued Irene, as steadily as if her pulse were normal. "I wonder he considered me, you know—all my experience has been in melodrama." Her face was suddenly dismayed. "Suppose it has spoiled me for better work?"

"I'm quite sure it hasn't. Very likely he has seen you act somewhere, and knows you'll be all right. That's possible, isn't it?"

"It's possible he has seen me act. I suppose it's the only explanation. Oh, I do pray! If I could make a hit in this part, it might lead to so much."

"You're devoted to the stage, after all, it seems?" he said, and the note of jealousy in his voice was loud.

She pretended not to hear the note.

"Yes, I suppose I am."

For a moment he stood mute, discomfited.

"Miss Thorpe, I came here from Paris just to see you. Do you understand what that meant?"

"N-no."

"You must! I'm not an idle man, or a rich man. I don't do these things for pastime. It meant that I couldn't stand being away from you. I want you to leave the stage and marry me. Oh, Irene, I'm so fond of you. Say you will!"

"I can't," she faltered.

"You don't care for me?"

"I do. Keep where you are! I'm not going to marry you; but I won't insult your love by saying I don't care. Keep where you are! You know why I can't marry you. Let go of me! I won't. I tell you I won't. Oh, well, kiss me if you like! But I sha'n't marry you. I'm honored, honored that you've asked me! But I tried to prevent you. I told Phoebe not to leave us. I've made up my mind; you'll never change it."

"I need you. I can't work without you. My sweet, what does the thing matter when we care for each other? I couldn't love you more if it had never happened. I'm glad it happened, if I wasn't to find you any other way! Have I no sins, am I so stainless? You shame me when you judge yourself like this—I dare think I'm fit to be your husband and you feel unworthy to be my wife!"

"Dear," she said, "I won't be your wife because I love you too much. If nobody knew but you and me, it'd be different. Others know, and every time we had to meet them you'd wince. Your wife has got to be a girl you can be proud of, sweetheart; not one who couldn't look your mother and father in the face."

"Listen," he cried. "I'm not a boy. I'm not talking without having considered. I don't tell you that you wouldn't feel wretched the first time you met my people. I know it couldn't be helped, though I'd make the way as easy for you as I could. I don't tell you that they'd leap for joy when they heard we were engaged—that's not to be expected. But I do tell you, on my honor, that I believe they'd take it fairly well when they found they couldn't stop it—and I tell you, too, that if they didn't, you shouldn't see them at all."

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Don't imagine that you'd be injuring me, that I should be 'disinherited,' like the fellows in books—there's nothing for me to inherit. All I shall ever have will be what I earn. Don't imagine that you'd be estranging us—when I came to England they'd want to see me just the same, and I should go there just the same. But you and I would live in Paris; and, however well they took it, you wouldn't be likely to see them for more than a few hours a year. Is it so very terrible? Is it bad enough to scare you into spoiling both our lives? Don't shirk it! I know it's a hard thing I'm begging of you, darling, but I'm begging to you for joy. Won't you be brave—for me?"

"I am being brave for you," she pleaded piteously.

"If you refuse, I go back to-night—to the place where I've thought of you

and hoped. I've fancied your coming to it; fancied where you'd sit, and what you'd say. It'll be a mournful sort of a place without you now. Just ghosts—ghosts of the dead hopes—for company."

She had no voice. Her figure swayed.

"Am I to go?"

She nodded dumbly.

"Irene?"

"You are to go."

"Good-by, then."

God, for the gift to foresee! Wisdom warned her to be obdurate; instinct counseled her to yield. Which of them was right? For his happiness, always for him, which way would be best in the end? She prayed for prescience.

He put out a hand to leave her, and she drew him, rejoicing, to her arms.



THE NICHE

LORD, I have tried the crowded way,
The fierce heart-burnings and the strife
With grim temptation day by day—
Spare me it, Lord, if this be life.

Give me the fireside undefiled,
By my own hands made sweet and clean;
A cradle-song—a little child
Whose frailer strength on mine will lean.

BETH SLATER WHITSON.

A HAND *at* POLITICS

BY

Steel Williams



OOKS as if we're bogged down complete on this county-seat deal, Red, for my check-up of the Range shows just twenty-seven more voters direct tributary to Twin Buttes than Hell's Kitchen's got, which in my ca'm jedgment puts us out of the runnin' to a practical certainty."

Arizony's tone shows that for once that usual optimistic and resourceful cow-man is havin' a mighty hard time to discover a single ray of light flickerin' through the gloom which has been gradual settlin' over us as, on behalf of the camp, we discusses, over our liquor in my private room in the saloon and speculatin' emporium from which Fate ordains me to draw the profits, the chances we has of securin' the seat of government of the county.

Now, ordinary I wouldn't have no more thought of questionin' that smooth-faced, Injun-tanned gent's opinion than I'd have tried to jump over old Baldy, which pokes its jagged head five hundred feet above the camp as it sort of leers contemptuous at the scattered, unpainted frame buildin's and the dirty tents which are thin spread on its flat, sandy foot. But I'm feelin' terrible cut up over the way Twin Buttes has succeeded in cold-deckin' us out of the county-seat which they has managed to do by surreptitious pullin' the political wires at Bismarck, which results in the Dakoty legislature ignorin' the first located town on the Little Missouri and by special statoot that underhanded camp gets the plum. And, too, they has tried to cinch it by gettin' in a

clause that it can't be moved 'less two things is done, which is, first, a petition signed by a majority of the legal voters; and, second, a majority at the election which is to be ordered on the petition. Knowin' the cow-gent's figures is right I ain't got no real hope and am only grabbin' at possible straws when I innocent blinks my chinks a-inquirin':

"Don't you s'pose, Arizony, that a proper financial argooment would convince enough of what you calls 'Twin Butte tributaries' to make us a winner?"

"I has mental canvassed the chances of such a attempt to reason enough votes into the box," laughin' drawls that sophisticated gent, shakin' his black top-knot, "and I sizes it up that they ain't a man on the Range could be reached that way, for if it's found out what infloences him it sure means his bein' planted by whichever camp he sells out."

I realizes that what he says is strict 'cordin' to Hoyle, and I pulls my carrot locks a-tryin' to think of somethin' else to offer as a reason for us openin' up a fight which looks so plumb footle that even Arizony's quick wit ain't able to figure that we has a chance. But I wrinkles my freckles total ineffective and final I proposes that we stroll over and see Larry Dunnell, who is the literary light of the camp, 'count of publishin' the only newspaper on the Little Missouri, which he facetious names the *Bad Lands Civilizer*.

"Larry's a edicated sharp all right, Red, but book-learnin' won't never pull us out of this hole," says the cow-gent, though he good-natured picks up his big white Stetson a-indicatin' he's willin' to 'company me.

But when we gets to the office of the *Civilizer* our minds temporary go to wanderin' from the business in hand, 'count of unexpected runnin' into the editor's wife Kate, and his sister Edith, who's been a visitin' 'em a couple of months and is figurin' to stay till late in the fall. And they are certain a pair of thoroughbreds, though their tellin' points is total dissimilar. Kate bein' gold-crowned, amber-eyed, rather short and extra plump, while Edith is three inches taller, willery slender and has gray-blue winders that when she's pleased look as mild as a fawn's, but when she's riled glitter as steel-cold as a snow-capped mountain in the moonlight. But her hair is where she gets the hundred-mark in a beauty show, and I can't help thinkin' that the gent who noted that such an adornment was woman's crownin' glory, must have been gazin' at Edith Dunnell in a prior incarnation when he writ the line.

And as she's the only eligible on the Range, barrin' one, who's in advanced waderhood, it nat'ral follows that every gent who ain't legal shut out of the game is playin' every card he holds to induce her to surrender her footure to his lovin' keepin'. She seems to enjoy the allurin' game tremendous, but absolute declines to make any actooal definite agreement, though she manages her hand so expert that there seemin' ain't a man on the Range who don't think he's got a show to ultimate win out.

Personal I ain't oversanguine 'bout my own chances, though she has my partnership offer in what she calls "abayance," which is a considerable gain on all my past ventures in Coopid's enticin' realm; but, of course, there ain't no opportunity at this time for me to ask Edith whether she's ready to take my answer from cold-storage. So, in lieu of speech, I leans my two-hundred-twenty agin Larry's old hand-press and assembles my freckles as soulful admirin' as a heavy type of manly beauty permits, though I regrets to say that my sentimental glances don't meet with any burnin' flashes indicatin' that she's gone real ravin'

crazy to throw herself into my willin' arms.

Then it strikes me that Arizony is onduly monopolizin' her smiles, and while I has always been his friend at cards I draws the line agin all the world in love's battlin', and I guess I acts some roode the way I breaks in on 'em, for Edith's eyes steel a trifle as she glances up as if she's cold inquirin' what warms me up so sudden.

"I sure didn't mean no offense," I apologizes hasty, for I sees my auburn temperament has made me take a palpable *fox paw*, which I does my best to retrace by addin' explanatory: "But we comes over to talk with Larry on a mighty important political matter and I'm some impatient to get at it soon as possible."

Complete mollified the girl turns her now sky-blues on me and exclaims eager excited a fannin' her flushed face with a handy *Civiliser*:

"I just love politics and has always wished I had a vote"—her white little teeth snap, though she laughs her words—"for I feels that I could play the game as well as any man that ever lived; and I wish you'd let Kate and me stay and hear you talk even if we can't put our ballots in on 'lection day."

"You sure got plenty of conceit, sis," sardonic chuckles Larry, "bout your qualifications as a vote-getter."

"Maybe I has," she comes back with a little toss of the head, which seems to make her caustic tone a heap more emphatic, "but not near so much as you men, who lordly assume that brains and breeches is synonymous, though goodness knows petticoat government is all that keeps this country half-way civilized now, so I holds I has a right to demand the ballot on past performance, which maybe enables us by hard work to ultimate civilize you complete."

Her eyes are sparklin', and she's breathin' quick like a old war-horse does when it smells powder, but present the color fades a little from her excited face and she ripples:

"But that ain't got anything to do with whether you're goin' to let Kate and me stay and hear you wise men

talk over your schemes. May we, Larry?" her flute soprano mellerin' irresistible. Knittin' his dark brows he runs his lean, ink-stained fingers through his long jet hair as he puckers his thin lips like he's havin' to consider the question mighty profound, then he grins:

"Far as I'm concerned you can stay and get your first lesson in politics, provided you solemnly swears to observe the fundamental rule of the game, which I'm sure afraid no woman would ever be able to do; though, under oath, I'll take chances on you and Kate."

"What's that?" snaps Edith, like she thinks she understands his josh without askin'.

"Keep your mouth shut 'bout what we talks over," laughs the editor-gent dodgin' behind the press as his sister's slim, brown hand reaches for a tin wash-basin which holds a thick liquid, original water, but now close resemblin' printer's ink.

"You ought to be 'shamed of yourself to spring that old, gray-haired slander on women, and then not be man enough to stand your ground when one of 'em shows you she intends defendin' her sex to the last gasp," twitters the girl, sort of reluctant settin' the rusty tin on its bench; and the white dove of peace temporarily spreads its wings above us and broods upon the scene.

Now, personal, while I is in general a adorer of females, I ain't never been very favorable inclined toward 'lowin' 'em to mix in political affairs and consequent ain't overanxious to have the women stay, but I dassen't file a objection 'count of Edith's havin' my proposal on ice. So when Arizony smiles drawlin' emphatic—though I knows absolute he's, to state it mild, prevaricatin'—that they ain't nothin' 'd please him more'n to have 'em stay and advise with us, I immediate follows suit. And we is rewarded by a heart-acceleratin' glance of thanks which is flashed from under her long lashes as the girl settles back in the swivel-editorial to comfortable listen to what we has to say.

Then we threshes over the situation

pro and con and Larry gives it as his opinion that there ain't no use raisin' the county-seat issue, as we're sure to lose out on that, and which probable likewise ends all chance of our electin' anybody on the ticket that we intends puttin' in the field. And we final concludes to give up the deal till the fol-lerin' year when the Northern Pacific Railroad, which is headed for our camp, will bring in a bunch of first-paper furriners, who'll be on hand to express their idees—under proper instruction—as to where the county-seat should be permanent located.

But Edith takes a hand in the game by laughin' mighty sarcastic as she elevates her straight nose like she's complete disgusted at our lack of sand.

"The idee of three big, revolver-carryin' men showin' the white feather 'cause they can't figure out in advance that they has a sure thing makes me glad, for once, that I'm a woman, for I don't believe you could find three of them who was vital interested in anything who'd refuse to draw cards just because they wasn't dead sure of gettin' a royal flush."

I ain't noways capable of quotin' her words exact, for her language and mine is certain derived from total different schools, so I mere indicates its substance usin' plain English and leavin' off all frills which don't come handy to my tongue just this minute.

We're all sort of knocked off our pins by her unexpected brandin' of our ca'm, matoore jedgment as bein' only a cover for a streak of yaller and we sits starin' at her in moot s'prise when she sudden catches her stride agin. Then her gray-blues shine like silver stars and the pink comes racin' into her velvet cheek as she springs to her feet. Brushin' back a braid of her black hair that has slipped its red-ribbon lariat she exclaims glowin' enthusiastic:

"Why, boys, it's the uncertainty of any game which makes it attractive and worth while; that's the reason I've always wanted the right to vote and mix in politics so as I can match my wit and brain agin both men and women; and the bigger the odds against my

side the more I'd enjoy the fight." She hesitates a second like she's debatin' whether she'll say any more or not, then her lips takes on a banterin', merry smile as they frame the words: "Just let me try my 'prentice hand in politics and we'll get names enough on the petition, and carry the 'lection, too."

She stands eager waitin' to hear what we has to say to her startlin' proposition and I conceeds that in my heart I'm more'n half-inclined to believe she could possible pull us through, for bein' a eligible and havin' all the right markin's to make her in universal demand her persuadin' powers would sure be tremendous. But as I mentions prior I'm agin women's meddlin' in politics, and per customary I immediate sticks my foot in it by sayin', in what I deems proper langwidge for sech a occasion :

"I certain likes to think you're right, Miss Edith," makin' my smile tolerant 'count of her sex, "but the trouble with you is the same as 'tis with females general, for you has jumped to a conclusion without a ioty of reason a-backin' it; and"—I'm so egotistic swelled up at airin' what I believes to be my intellectooal superiority that I complete fails to note the clouds that's darkenin' the blue which lies sheltered behind her narrowin' lids—"it ain't to be expected that women should know anything 'bout practical politices, for that's a game for jedgment—not female intuitions."

The masculine conceit was a fairly oozin' from my freckles as I finishes patronizin' this girl, who was only waitin' for me to shut my fool mouth to sail into me. Then the storm broke and for the next minute or two she, metaphorical speakin', made a punchin'-bag of me by hurlin' in my lobster-red face a load of, what she calls, facts and figures concernin' how s'perior women always shows theirselves when they has a chance to compete with man, and of which I am heretofore as ignorant as a mule. And havin' floored me statistically, as she terms it, she opens up a line of sarcasm concernin' my bumptious comments on her sex, which I certain deep appreciates, for I'd a cheerful

give the check-rack to've had back my offendin' words.

Kate, Larry, and that onprincipled cow-gent, who I knows holds my views exact, are a clappin' their hands and eggin' the girl on, so I does the discreet for once and holds up my paws in token of surrender. And as the storm gradual subsides I diplomatic changes front, a-seekin' at the same time to put Arizony in a hole, as I facetious remarks :

"The gale that has jest been toyin' with my auburn tresses has entire cleared the cobwebs from doubtin' brain, and I now stands to back your play, Miss Edith, to the limit, for I'm dead certain that if you can 'lectioneer half as well as you has lectured a gent, who ventures to polite set up his 'pinion agin yours, we sure wins this county-seat race in a walk."

And for these capitulatin' words I draws a smile which so bad onsettles my jedgment that, if I'd a had the power to make it effective I'd a then and there signed a document certifyin' that, in the opinion of American white men, his women were full as able to proper manipulate the ballot as any of the blacks, browns, and non-English-speakin' furrin-borns we has heretofore admitted into the ballot-stuffin' game.

But I don't get nothin' on the cow-man, as he immediate sets in his checks long-side of mine, for he's the kind of a sport that never allows no man to bluff him in the game of Love. Larry, however, ain't so easy led by the nose, and usin' his brother-privilege he demurs considerable to our bein' talked into the scheme by what he dubs "female hysteria and general foolishness."

But Kate takes a hand in the play in her mild, dotin' way and, as the literary gent would have jumped off the top of old Baldy into the river if his yaller-haired mate so requests, it ain't only a minute 'fore he laughin' puts his shirt-sleeve arm round her plump waist, a-grinnin' as he fond strokes her gold head:

"I 'low we're makin' big fools of ourselves in agreein' to it, but, that havin' been the custom of man when dealin'

with females since Adam set the example, I don't want to spoil a unbroke record, so I throws my judgment to the winds and joins you in backin' a woman's whim."

Then he paws over a pile of papers a-lyin' on the floor and present digs out a copy of the special laws of the Territory of Dakoty containin' the one which makes Twin Buttes the county-seat.

"I'll run off some blank petitions a-follerin' this form"—his slim fingers pointin' to the book—"and by to-morrer, sis"—his tone mockin' deferential—"everything'll be ready for you to start in demonstratin' what a political wonder you really is."

But the girl seems entire satisfied at havin' carried her point, and don't make no attempt to bandy words with him, and remains as ca'm and unruffled as the summer sky archin' above us. And I improves the silence by givin' her a admirin' look which I fattous hopes tends to cause her to make a favorable report on that little abayance matter of mine; then I brings a smile to her face by laughin':

"Well, boys, based on past performance, she sure makes good, for her 'prentice hand certain proves mighty effective on the first three gents she tries it."

The next mornin' bright and early Edith and Kate comes out proper harnessed for hard ridin'. A little hat with red trimmin's tops the black head and a similar straw jim-crack laced with blue covers the gold one; their divided skirts matchin' their head-gear to a T. And as I watches their glowin' faces which add material to the general color-scheme in brightenin' up and actoal beautifyin' the barren desert surroundin' 'em, I full realizes why it is that no artist has ever undertook to draw a whiskered angel. The women is headin' for Lucky Marvin's, who with his cow-punchers is the only votes we figure on in his district, where they intends campin' with his wife, Rosey, who was former known as the "Daughter of the Ranges."

"You needn't expect to see us back

till we has names enough of the enemy to make gettin' a vote a sure thing," banters the lady that has my proposal in pickle, deft swingin' her Winchester into place.

"'Cordin' to that, Kate, I 'low we may as well bid each other a eternal adoo," laughs Larry, a-kissin' her curvin' red lips as he swings her into the saddle. Then the females goes gallopin' down the dusty alkali trail, which winds along the river to Twin Buttes twenty miles to the north.

"A purty fine pair to draw to, ain't they, Red?" sort of involuntary asks the editor, a-gazin' admirin' at the graceful undulatin' black and gold.

"They certain are good-lookers, Larry, but," I comes back facetious, "the trouble is that the yaller card is already drawed and the dark one can't be made to fill your hand no matter how many times you takes a pull at the deck."

"You're always in such a confounded hurry, Red," chuckles the literary gent, "and, too, you're too easy discouraged."

"Which I admits I'm some strong on quick action with females"—I grins appreciative of his joke—"but I denies absolute the last part, for I've never 'bandoned a eligible—"ceptin' the ancient widder, who is now on the feedin'-grounds—who's showed up on the Little Missouri till some luckier gent has actoally had her haltered."

"Sis is mighty pecul'ar," Larry's black eyes twinkle humorous as he friendly cautions me, "and I suspects she's some flirtatious, so I wouldn't advise any gent to bet too strong that he's got her hobbled till he gets the proper document so certifyin'."

Then he goes into the *Civilizer* office to stick type, and I trails for the Palace to get my bacon and coffee.

The next evenin' the sun is just dippin' behind the buttes when I hears three or four quick shots which I knows come from a Winchester, and I races from my emporium to see who's bein' prepared for the undertaker. The shooters ain't in sight, but the next second them two 'lectioneerin' females' broncs come dashin' from behind old

Baldy, and the women's repeaters are bangin' like they're bein' chased by a band of Sioux Injuns, which for a minute I thinks is the fact, so I grabs my rifle and legs it hard as I can run. But as I gets to the *Civilizer* office them riotous females pull up their ponies a-laughin', carryin' on in a way that shows me I has been some hasty in assumin' that the noble red man has broke the treaty which was proper smoked over by Uncle Sam and Sittin' Bull *et al.* a year back.

"What does all this yer onseemly shootin' up of this peaceful camp by you petticoat bandits signify?" I inquires, tryin' to make my face official stern, for as chairman of the General Committee I acts ex-official as town marshal. But my effort to assoome a severe expression is plumb footile, as all I succeeds in doin' is to gaze lovesick admirin' at the beamin', flushed face of Edith, whose mass of jet hair has tumbled down and is hangin' below the girth of the Mexican saddle which she's ridin' man-fashion.

"So it's your idee that women ain't got brains enough to warrant godlike man in lettin' us have a say in politics, is it, Red?" chirps the girl, total ignorin' both my words and glances. "Well, them thirty-two shots we fires is a self-given salute in honor of two non-votin' women, who, in less'n thirty-six hours, has accomplished what three of this camp's leadin' citizens claims was impossible."

And so sayin' she proud hauls out a paper and hands it to me, which I opens and there counts a even thirty-two names of Twin Butte tributaries, no one of whom, in my judgment, could've been got by any man on earth.

"How does you do it?" I gasps, complete dumfounded.

"Easy," she laughs careless, twistin' up her top-dressin' and skillful jabbin' in a few picket-pins. "We just rides over the Range and tells the boys there's goin' to be a impromptu dance at Rosey's, and 'fore the fiddle starts them thirty-two come lopin' in." Pausin' a second she claps her hands a-cryin': "Wasn't it fun, Kate? And

even if I had to dance thirty-two sets again to-night for as many more names I believe we could laugh as much as ever at seein' how simple this political game really is when women manages the deal. But to tell the honest truth," slidin' from her pony, "when we quit at nine o'clock this mornin' I don't believe I could've even walked through another set to have carried the election. And we ain't had a minute's sleep yet, Larry dear, so Kate and me are goin' to bed, and you can continer to board at the Palace, as there won't be no meals served at your castle till we recuperates from our political labors."

Course gettin' the rest of the necessary names ain't nothin' but a matter of seein' the boys, and 'cordin' to statootie the 'lection is duly ordered. But as the gents whose names are danced on to the petition ain't legal bound to vote our way, we still considers that we has about the same chance of winnin' as a suckin' lamb would have in a mix-up with a starvin' kiote.

Long about six weeks 'fore 'lection day Edith announces that she's goin' up to visit Rosey Marvin till the fray is over, as that location saves her a awful lot of hard ridin'. But what her scheme is for gettin' votes we don't know, for she absolute refuses to disclose her plans more, sayin' that she thinks when the returns is in they'll ample prove that the political field is woman's nat'r'l long suit.

And, too, she has brought about another innovation in Macory County politics, for the *Civilizer* don't have nothin' to say 'bout the Twin Butte crowd 'ceptin' it's of the most flatterin' character. Larry kicks considerable on sech a radical change of policy, for he has a number of past records that sure makes interestin' readin', but the girl is in the saddle, and it has to go as she says or she threatens to jump the whole business, which we all knows ends every possibility of our winnin'. But this way of handlin' the campaign saves lots of shootin' scrapes, as on the surface there don't appear to be a ripple indicatin' that anything onusual is goin' on.

What the girl is doin' to get votes is a mystery, for she hardly ever leaves the Marvin ranch 'cept for a occasional antelope-hunt with Rosey as a partner. But her visit is certain a bonanza for the cow-men and cow-punchers for miles around, who utilize this opportunity to drop over to Lucky's as often as possible a-tryin' to correct size up their chances of inducin' Edith to leave the lonely single life for matrimonial joys. And from all reports each gent is backin' himself to win, for up to 'lection day there ain't no fallin' off in the attendance.

I accidental happens up to Lucky's one day and inquires somewhat joshin' 'bout the prospects of her gettin' a single vote in the box.

"You can be funny at my expense if you want to," she laughs good-humored, "but just the same it begins to look to me that if I just had a little more time I could make the thing unanimous."

"How the——" I ketches my accustomed tongue 'tween my teeth jest in time to stop its utterin' the common Range s'prise word, for the girl is dead set agin even mild cussin', then I trails apologetic halting: "Kin you work 'em, for the man don't live who could get a vote on these feedin'-grounds for love or money?"

"Confessin' that in this case man is a failure only proves, if I wins out, that woman has nat'r'nal political attriboots which makes her vast superior to the male biped spite of his long years of practical experience; but"—she laughin' shakes her crow-black head—"my methods is my own secret, though the results, of course, has got to speak for themselves."

Seein' I can't get her to show her hand, and jest at that minute her dimples bein' special enticin', I delicate attempts to hurry her into returnin' a favorable answer to my little matter that she's been holdin' in abayance so long; but my work is evident considered coarse, for she backs off and gives me to understand plain that all negotiations on the subject matrimonial will be declared at a end if I ever tries to get

spoony agin. Then I loses my temper and flares that I has a idee that she's only playin' with me anyhow, and demands to know definite where I'm at—immediate. Turnin' her big gray-blues on my chinys she sighs like it's a awful grief for her to speak the words, then I gets my quietus as she murmurs:

"If you will force me to answer—now, Red, I must say—no; though —" But I breaks in tellin' her it's all a red-headed mistake 'bout my bein' in sech a all-fired rush for a reply and begs her to "abayance" the thing agin as long as pleases her.

She taps her little foot on the ground and draws down her curvin' brows like she's reflectin' deep, but final mournful shakes her head a-sayin':

"No, Red, seein' I has answered under almost compulsion, I guess we'll consider the incident closed."

And as at that tick one of the tributaries that she's s'posed to be doin' missionary work on comes gallopin' in, I swings my grief into the saddle and heads for Hell's Kitchen 'bout as fast as my sixty pounds overweight permits.

When I gets into the saloon I finds Arizony a-leanin' his Apollerlike form—and that's no josh—agin' my imitation walnut in a attitoode indicatin' he's 'bout to imbibe, so I joins him, and my sorror bein' heavier than I could carry single-handed, I impulsive bares my achin' breast and tells him my tale of woe. I notices that he ain't moved to tears by my idiotic confidence, and as I finishes he drawls in a tone that makes me feel like I stood for considerable less than a white chip:

"Why, you freckled-faced, Irish gorilly, you don't mean to tell me you ever has any hopes of Edith Dunnell's matin' up with sech a connectin' link as you be, do you?" I'm so total paralyzed by this gross insultin' question that I ain't even able to reach for my gun, and while I'm takin' another drink to steady my outraged nerves that coal-eyed, grinnin' cow-man laughs mollifyin' whimsical: "Ain't you never heard that Larry's folks is dead swells in Shecawgo sasciety; and that this sister

of his'n is a female that wears gowns 'stead of dresses? And"—he don't give me a chance to answer—"you don't reckon, does you, that sech a female is goin' to hook up with one of us Range gents, who don't even know whether a dress-coat buttons front or back?"

All this is entire news to me 'bout the literary gent's folks bein' upper-crust, as he certain has never throwed on no airs since he comes to the Little Missouri from Montany near three years back.

"Well, for a gown-lady she can sure ride a bronc, shoot a Winchester, and handle United States as it's in vogue in the cattle country 'bout as well as the dress-females, who're what might be termed indigenous to the soil," I comments, complete forgettin' my rage in my astonishment at what he springs on me. "How is it she has all the 'complishments of a native if she's been a-devotin' her life to leadin' Germans *et cetera*?"

"Which I explains"—Arizony's tan ripples into a comical grin—"as Larry hands it to me when I went to have a little talk with him on"—the cow-man actoal has the grace to blush—"what he thought the chances was of his sister bein' induced to take a full half-interest in my ranch; and incidental tower furrin' parts a spell after gettin' the proper voucher for the trip. 'Sis told me last week,' he answers, 'that she was goin' home soon as she knew how 'lection had gone, and near as I can size it up, Arizony, you're 'bout the only unattached gent on the Range that ain't asked her direct to doubleteam it with him; and to tell you the dead-honest truth, I don't believe it would do you any good to make it unanimous.' Then Larry goes on to tell me how, when she's comin' sixteen, Edith spent nearly a year with him on his ranch in Montany, which his old gent backed him for; and how after the girl got her health back and left, he got to rollin' it some near the ceilin' and lost out; then his wrathy dad tells him to rustle for himself; and final plumb disowns him when he splices up with Kate; and that his sister's visit,

while nominal 'count of her health, is really to try and pave the way for bringin' about a general reconciliation. 'No man can tell what a woman'll do, Arizony,' Larry laughs final, 'but sis is comin' out agin in the spring, and as a friend I advises you to defer actin' till then, anyhow.' And which, Red," chuckles the cow-man, "I sure intends doin', though *ad interim*, as I hears a law-sharp say, I'm goin' to hire a French dancin' master to come on and post me on Shecawgo *etty kay*, so I kin act like I was to the manner born if I ever has occasion to call on her swell folks."

Nat'rally, when I understands the layout, I sees that I has been shootin' at a star with a mighty poor gun, but my grief is some tempered by knowin' that Arizony wasn't any smarter than me, 'ceptin' in consultin' with Larry, which ain't never my way of doin' business, as I always prompt goes direct to headquarters.

"Course I has always noticed what I guess you never observes, Arizony," I tunes my bass condescendin' affable, for I wants the cow-gent to feel that I has a little somethin' on him anyway, "that this yer female talks considerable school-English, but"—I hasty starts to hedgin' when I sees a sarcastic drawin' of his thin lips—"I conceeds that I never suspects that it's as hifalutin' as it must be to be *oh fay* in Shecawgo."

"Sech a feeble bluff might go, Red," is his gibbin' retort, a ruthless twittin' on fact, "if I didn't happen to know that every time you has to sign your name you has to drink left-handed for a week." And I abrupt changes the subject.

Everything runs along quiet and easy far as the campaign goes, and from all reports the girl that has run us into the county-seat fight ain't visible turnin' her hand over to infloence a vote. But at last the day we're all anxious for comes, and early in the evenin' the Road to Hell is crowded waitin' for the news from the Marvin district, as it's confident expected that somebody'll be in with the figure 'fore midnight. But two hours earlier Edith, Rosey, and

Lucky come racin' in bearin' the returns, and the next second Marvin is standin' on the bar.

"My pollin'-place casts a plumb unanimous vote for makin' this camp the county-seat," yells Lucky; "thirty-five in all, and only three from my ranch. Three cheers and repeat for the woman who, single-handed, makes us a winner in a walk!"

And pandemonium certain breaks loose.

Then some bubblin' gent jumps onto the faro-table and roars:

"I moves that we goes over to Larry's instanter and fires a 'propriate salute to this female political wonder, who'd be elected Queen of these United States this minute if the votin' was left to Hell's Kitchen."

And the next tick the crowd is leggin' for the editor's. As the Winchesters and forty-five's begin their crackin' roar, Edith and Kate come out with arms around each other's waists and stand on the little stoop till all the ketridges is fired. Then Edith gives us a movin' little speech of thanks, a-windin' up by earnest askin' us if we ever has a chance to vote to give her sex equal political rights to our own.

"For," she laughs, jokin' contagious, "if you men'll only give us the right to take a hand in 'lections, we'll prove to your entire satisfaction that you has never really understood the roodiments of the game."

When the noisy laugh follerin' her pointed *jew de spree* subsides, she tells us she's goin' home on the mornin' stage, and would like to shake hands with us all 'fore she leaves. And I guess that by the time the last hat-in-hand-gent's hard fist has reluctant let loose of her soft, slim hand, she's 'bout as near wore out as she was the night she dances for the names on her petition.

Then the celebratin' is 'resoomed at my emporium, but, as there ain't a shot left in anybody's belt, everything goes as merry as a marriage-bell, and no fatalities is recorded.

The next mornin' as the stage pulls up in front of Larry's, I strolls over to

see if I can't get Edith to tip the play she wins out on. I finds Arizony on hand lookin' subdoed sentimental as he stands talkin' to the girl very soft and low. Present she puts out her little paw, which the cow-proprietor handles scientific gentle for a second, then releases it with artistic regret. And, as his coal-black eyes flash moot speakin' to her gray-blues, I sees her heavy lashes faint tremble in a way that makes me think it's mighty near a even bet that if that onusual good-lookin' gent gets hold of the right kind of a trainer to proper initiate him into the mystery of wearin' a spike tail as if it actoal belongs to him, the girl may ultimate conclude to spend her summers in the Bad Lands and winters in Paris, for the cow-man's bank-roll'll easy stand the expense. Final the driver gathers up the ribbons, and I forges to the front.

"I'm a-burnin' with curiosity, Miss Edith, to know what argooment you advances to the Twin Butte tributaries which makes 'em vote our way unanimous, and as a partin' favor"—I turns on my most fetchin' smile—"I hopes you'll tell me how you done it."

A flush rushes to her cheek, then a comical smile plays about the corners of her scarlet lips, and, leanin' her curvin' arm on the winder-sill, she shakes her mass of black as she ripples:

"Twouldn't be fair to womankind in general, Red, for me to give away our political methods; but," she peals, as the old Concord rolls off, "it's just possible some man may not be as close-mouthed as I am."

And sure enough, for it wasn't forty-eight hours 'fore we knows all about it, as Twin Buttes sets up a awful roar a-claimin' fraud and declarin' heated it was goin' to contest the 'lection therefor. But the Bismarck law-sharks hold that, assumin' some female did allow thirty-two tributaries to erroneous infer that she'll splice with 'em if they votes to please her, it ain't no statoot ground for a contest; even further assumin' that each of said gents wrongfull gets the idee that he's the only man in the district so votin'.



The BLOOM of YOUTH

By Jane W. Guthrie

FOR more than three years Christina Carrington had considered herself the object of misplaced affection; and, indeed, the zest with which Mitchell Mallery at the mature age of forty-one was manifesting his love for her might have been somewhat terrifying should one fail to take into account temperamental qualities which had placed him at the head of his profession with a name for persistence, daring, and resourcefulness.

Christina, however, viewing these virtues from the personal point of view, regarded them with the same smile that greeted the long-stemmed violets, fresh and dewy, which lay upon her breakfast-tray every morning in winter, a silent but insistent demand that her first waking thoughts should be of the donor, Mitchell Mallery. It was more a glow of feeling in the eyes than any manifestation of the lips—a half-tender impatience, an exasperated pity, suggesting that complexities were vested in those violets denying them the full and hearty welcome their beauty merited. She never, however, allowed any rougher hands than her own to place them in water in a delicate green glass vase where they glowed a soft purple dusk of perfume; and in the afternoon or evening, some time during the day, those same wells of sweet odor faded upon her breast, distilling their fugitive fragrance to remind her constantly of him.

In earlier life, Mitchell Mallery had

made himself proof against feminine wiles by devotion to his profession, earning thereby the title of "woman-hater," which, while it connoted some quality of mental reserve, in no adequate fashion described the man. Nevertheless, the primitive and homely term confessed an underlying truth, for in his heart he was desperately afraid of women—those of his own social grade, who asked from him the courtesies due their fair, flowerlike, and cultivated artificiality—and had come to believe himself outside of their consideration.

When presented then to Mrs. Carrington, an attractive widow of thirty-five, at the home of a friend on one of his rare occasions of social indulgence, he spoke no word of greeting, but, backing away from her, he stationed himself against the wall on the other side of the room, where he stood regarding her with an earnestness that was at first amusing to her, and then it got on her nerves. Christina fretted under that steady, unwavering regard.

"For goodness' sake!" she whispered to her host. "Please go and take that man out of the room. I'm shaking with fear. I don't know whether he is marshaling my sins for the purpose of dress parade, or whether he is reading me a sentence of doom, but he makes me desperately uneasy. He looks like Fate, if anything of so commonplace and unheroic an aspect could resemble destiny or what's in store for my latter end."

Mallery certainly was not an impressive figure. He was short and square and somewhat roughly hewn,

with a good head set on shoulders too broad for his height. His brown hair plentifully sprinkled with gray was noticeably thin about the temples and on the top of the head, but he looked immaculately clean; as clean mentally and morally as his beautifully shaped hands and his clear, bright eyes, the two most striking features that he possessed. His eyes particularly were fine, the deep-set hazel eyes that mark the thinker and man of action in one. They seemed almost luminous at times with powers of perception which gave him vision beyond the ordinary mortal, and, at others, to haunt one with the impression that an imprisoned soul looked out from their depths. It was this latter expression in his eyes that prompted Christina to speak with extreme gentleness as one speaks to an afflicted or uncomprehending child when, after a three days' acquaintance, he asked her to marry him.

"Why, Doctor Mallery," she said. "I am perfectly contented with my life as it is. I never intend to marry again. I am not grieving in despair. I am a sensible woman, I hope, but I value my leisure. A man is too absorbing an occupation to undertake a second time at my age. The very thought bores me. I am my own mistress now. I can come and go as I please without any one to consult or consider. Yes, I am lonely now and then, but not sufficiently so to warrant forgetfulness of the hours when to have any one about trespassing on my time, and care, and attention would drive me to nervous prostration."

Christina's husband had been an exacting invalid, and the death of her two children, whom she had passionately mourned, had taught her, she felt, the value of a life devoid of emotional strain. If, however, she meant Mallery to believe her cold-hearted and selfish in her attitude toward life by this statement of feeling, she failed in her intention. He established himself as a daily visitor at her house, was ever at hand to serve her or spare her the slightest fret from the cares of life, with the result that Christina was

learning for the first time in her existence the heights and depths of a man's overwhelming love and compelling care; she had had a surfeit of love without the care.

One morning in February, the bunch of violets lay upon the breakfast-tray beside a single letter, the offering of the early mail, and, glancing indifferently at it at first, Christina was startled into a closer examination by the handwriting on the superscription. It had been long since she had seen that writing, and a joyous anticipation brightened her eyes and flamed in color on her cheeks as she opened the envelope hastily and glanced through the letter, while the contents of her breakfast-tray diffused into the surrounding atmosphere the superheated temperature which was the first requisite of palatable food to her. Christina always insisted that she could not drink her coffee unless it were at the bubbling point of heat, and this, while largely a figure of feminine exaggeration, adequately interpreted temperamental inclinations. Stale or lukewarm offerings in life, literature, or love did not appeal to her at all. Now, however, she ate her food indifferently and drank her coffee without consideration as she read and re-read her letter.

Anne, coming into the room at that moment, saw her preoccupation, and, sitting down on the arm of a chair with an excitement born of sisterly curiosity, asked with somewhat vulgar indifference to grammar and Christina's lack of welcome:

"Who's your letter from?"

Christina did not immediately answer, but laid the letter aside with a deliberation which might have suggested to a stranger, but not to Anne, a fine-spun annoyance.

Anne had unfortunately conceived the idea in early life that a considerate Providence had brought her into existence for the express purpose of directing and shaping the careers of those about her, and no one had ever been able to disabuse her mind of that idea; certainly Christina had not. Being alone in the world, and possessed of a

limited income—sometimes, when she had been extravagant, none at all—Anne made her home with her sister Christina, who was much younger than herself. Having failed to marry, she owned to an insatiable desire to arrange all of the matrimonial affairs of her friends and far-reaching acquaintances.

"Who is it?" probed Anne insistently.

"It is from Gerald Hamilton," replied Christina, withholding any further description of its contents.

"Jerry Hamilton!" cried Anne. "What is he writing to you for? Christina," severely, "I hope you are not getting up a correspondence with him. He has great capacities for making a fool of himself, at least he used to have, and if he is as handsome and as irresponsible and as undependable as he promised to be, those capacities must have been fostered to the danger-point. You remember how he behaved before your marriage?"

"I have always been very fond of Jerry," Christina replied stiffly. "I could not 'get up' a correspondence with him for the simple reason that I have always written to him now and then, just as I have always kept up my friendship with him. He used to come to see me whenever he was in New York, but I haven't seen him since—"

"Since you became a widow," Anne supplied. "Now, Christina, let me give you a piece of advice. You don't want to have Jerry Hamilton hanging around here, as he used to at home, or writing to you or coming to see you. Doctor Mallory is the last person to put up with that kind of nonsense. Besides, Jerry Hamilton is years younger than you are."

Christina laughed lightly, derisively, goaded into explanations and self-justification.

"He is exactly three years younger than I am, Anne; and as it happens, he has asked me to go and call upon a young girl, Margaret Osborne, who is visiting here, and in whom he says he has been much interested. Apparently he has been devoted to her for months, and he wants my opinion of her, and,

of course, courtesies of some sort," Christina spoke with distant and somewhat stately civility. "He alludes to our former love-affair, and says that he has never forgotten it, that the memory of it will always be one of his most cherished possessions."

Anne went into fits of rocking laughter. "Of all things! I'd like that if I were you! When a man speaks or writes in that way, he certainly is putting you into the antediluvian class. I needn't have bothered myself about a revival of your love-affair with Jerry Hamilton. He's looking at youth now, doubtless vivid youth, and you—Christina, how old are you? Oh, yes, I remember. You're thirty-eight, nearly thirty-nine. The idea of his asking your opinion about the girl he is going to marry! I hope you have no intention of expressing it, for any way that you would put it would never satisfy him. Well"—Anne rose as if she had delivered an incontrovertible opinion and was adding a clinching argument—"it ought to be a comfort to you that you were never in love with Jerry Hamilton. He just proves a truth I have always maintained, that when a man begins life with such an overwhelming and desperate attack of first love for an older woman, he measures up by marrying late in life some silly little chit of a girl hardly out of her teens. It's the working of the law of compensation. Jerry Hamilton promised to be a very handsome man," Anne remarked as she moved toward the door, "but if I were you, Christina, I'd forget to go and call upon his lady-love. She'd scan you speculatively, and she'd conclude at once and with extreme fright that you and Jerry had had a desperate love-affair and that you had probably been jilted; and she'd make it unpleasant for Jerry after marriage by forming you into a good-sized volcano that she'd keep well in the foreground of the domestic landscape until Jerry will wish that he had never heard your name. Let him make up his own opinions. You're a perfect babe in wisdom when it comes to handling men, so take my advice."

"Anne, go out of my room!"

Christina's voice was rasped, but Anne only laughed lightly as at a good joke, and closed the door without resentment, leaving behind her a very exasperated Christina, who, after a few moments of calming deliberation, rose and locked that door against even her maid's intrusion, then, turning to the window, pulled the shade up to the limit of the roller, letting in a flood of bright, clear sunshine.

It fell full upon her as she stood in front of the cheval-glass which mirrored her whole figure. She threw off the soft, rose-tinted peignoir which she wore and stood without its fictitious bloom, her bare arms and shoulders rising above the simplicities of her lingerie devoid of any feminine devices of concealment of personal defects or the years which now counted almost thirty-nine, as she well knew. In her test she missed no single blemish, disguised no weak spot; she merely observed as a good general or a woman the forces she had in hand. She lifted the softly waved edges of her brown-black hair where it rolled away from her face—gray, unmistakably gray, but very beautiful and distinguished-looking in its markings and the character that it gave to her appearance. She ran her finger over her cheek; it was still fair and white, with color that came and went in swift interpretation of emotions.

Then she looked into the clear blue eyes gazing back at her from between their long-fringed lashes beneath their beautifully straight eyebrows. The throat was long and slender and still unwrinkled, and only the shadow of its coming rested beneath the chin where that fatal marking line under the round defines the unmistakable strokes of age and the banishing of a lingering youth reluctant to leave its house of life. The long, slender figure still kept its lines, but—oh!

Christina sat down on a chair and put her hands over her eyes—they were hot and her cheeks burned and her mouth was twisted with suppressed anguish, as if she wanted to cry. Anne

was right. The years had left their etchings upon both her face and her figure. She still held her own against the encroaching years, but not in that sweet, youthful delicacy which had once so definitely been hers. It was a ripened maturity which frightened her. She had shut her eyes to it all along—and had been indifferent to it for a while and then resigned, but now—now it stood out in bold, flaming characters before her. She saw herself through Gerald Hamilton's eyes, since, as Anne said, he could appreciate only youth, and extreme youth, at that; and she saw herself through the eyes of other people.

She was forced to concede that the years had still permitted her a gracious gift of beauty, but that, like Eve, she had left her Paradise of youth, and, remembering those other years, she looked backward with misty vision as she saw her towers of beauty, tipped with the gray tints of years and regret, receding from her.

But Christina had never been one to tilt with the inevitable. She had lived too long with Anne for indulgence in any such folly; moreover, she was too feminine. She had a fashion of turning the inevitable to account and of extracting from it all that it had left to yield. She had always made the best of things, but, being a woman, she was also prone to listen to serpents, and yet, with the reserves of sophistry, for the letter that she wrote to Jerry Hamilton in answer to his, whether consciously or unconsciously reflecting the stings of Anne's utterances, had power to bring Christina before Hamilton with a peculiar tenderness of memory.

It was her greatest gift, that faculty of putting herself so delicately in touch with another's thought, that she seemed to make herself the interpretation of all of his thought. Christina had been endowed with the mysterious charm which is given to some women apart entirely from beauty or cleverness—the ability of making men adore and love and long for them.

Her letter set Hamilton thinking; it roused in him vague longings, memo-

ries that were sweet; he did not realize until now how sweet they were. He knew, however, that he wanted to see her before he made up his mind definitely about Margaret Osborne, who, being absent from him now, had grown slightly vague, like a spring wild flower lacking in perfume. Christina always had such a vivid personality; it breathed out from the very words and sentences in her letter; he felt it beneath all the gay, bright chaff as a sort of call to him, and he responded. He must see her. He must go at once to her. He must talk to her. His engagement to Margaret was a matter of in consequence.

And Christina, when he came, blossomed into new and gracious beauty. Laughter lurked in her eyes, and merry make-believe on her lips. She was full of pretty and alluring fancies, just as she had been when a girl; of bewitching vagaries in speech and action, and delightful whimsicalities. Mallery looked at her with grave consideration in these days. This was a Christina he had never known, never dreamed of; but Hamilton knew her of old, and again, as then, was completely fascinated by her.

In her he found the fulfilment of more even than she had promised, a radiance like a rare jewel exquisitely cut and polished. Even Anne grew less dogmatic in the atmosphere of the daily masculine flavor contributed to their days by Mallery's accustomed droppings-in, and the electric presence of Jerry Hamilton, who set her mind going, she conceded, like whirring wheels eager to perform their revolutions.

No one seemed to remember that confessed interest in Margaret Osborne for whom he had sought Christina's good graces. Only occasionally in those first few days did Jerry himself recall it, and for Christina it had never been. She had full vision now of her towers of Paradise, golden in the sunlight of a revived and happy youth. It was Christina Hamilton loved. He told her so; and having done so, immediately began to criticize her mentally.

He could no more have helped this than he could have helped breathing. His keenly observing and critical eyes found shadows under her eyes that had escaped him in the joy of a rediscovery of the girl who had been his first love. He saw a crease just where the ear joins the soft round of the cheek, a slight thickening of the features once so delicately fine and sharply outlined, and the unmistakable dust of gray on the hair.

Nor could he help contrasting her with the young girls and young women he met on the Avenue in the crisp, ringing afternoons when the horses' hoofs rang out on the asphalt and gay voices stabbed the frosty air. Even the finish of Christina's appearance, the art of her beauty, the delight he had in seeing her perfect walk, and in walking with her, met its contrast to him in the exquisite round of a very young girl's face, the soft glow of color on her cheek, the appealing awkwardness of her untrained figure, so immature that she had not yet learned how to handle it. In the first days of the second week of his stay in New York he found these fancies taking daily a firmer hold upon him, and recurring over and over again, like a strain of haunting music, was the memory of a sweet and lovely young girl, Margaret Osborne, who had assured him that she loved him.

She appealed to him, she wooed him, she expressed all of those ideals that a man asks to bring out in him the protective sense, so flattering to his self-love and importance. Christina dominated him, his senses, and his intellect. She was like some brilliant, gorgeous flower that one longs to possess and build a conservatory about that it may bring honor and renown in its possession. He did not know which was the more alluring, which made him the happier, but he made up his mind to find out the next day, to go and call upon Margaret Osborne. He and Christina were bound for the theater that evening.

Christina had begun to reflect his thought; instinctively she felt and knew what was disturbing him. She had not

worn her violets for more than a week, but now she handled them more carefully and lingeringly as she placed them in water in the mornings when sober thought clarified her vision. She began to consider Mitchell Mallery's good points, to remember him in those qualities of rest and reliance, and self-sacrificing care and protection, with which he seemed always to encompass her.

As she was going out to the theater that night with Hamilton, she met Mallery coming in for a word or two with Anne and herself. He looked a shade graver, a trifle more careworn, but his eyes brightened as he caught sight of the violets on her breast and met a waft of their perfume. Christina, reaching out, too, took his hand with a lingering touch, as if she were trying to tell him something that she did not exactly understand herself, but felt she needed the help and strength of his consoling and ever-present love.

Anne noted the expression on Mallery's face when he entered the room where she was sitting reading, and, deeming it was time for her to speak, she proceeded to do so with her characteristic vigor and lack of consideration for any point of view but her own.

"Doctor Mallery," she said, without preamble, "do you want to marry Christina?"

Mallery bent his penetrating eyes upon Anne without a change of expression, as if he were keenly observing her and her purpose in touching upon personal questions.

"Mrs. Carrington knows that I have been presumptuous enough to long for that since the first time that I saw her."

"Why don't you do it, then? Why do you allow a man like Jerry Hamilton to carry her right off from under your nose?" Anne always spoke more graphically than eloquently. "You certainly can see, as I can, that in this recent infatuation there are more elements of revived friendship than anything else. Jerry Hamilton never could make Christina happy. I knew him when a boy and a young man, and

he's no more in love with Christina than he's in love with me. He is only in love with himself and his own perceptions. Christina satisfies his critical faculties, but he hasn't got it in him to be satisfied with anything for very long. He's spent the best of his life in a chase for the unattained, which if, by chance, becomes the attained is valueless. He could not appreciate the best, the sweetest, and finest in Christina any more than Fluff, her cat, can. Why don't you make her marry you at once?"

Mallery looked at Anne with meditative eyes. He always had appreciated her at her true worth, and her words had weight with him because she was absolutely without artificiality. She was simple, if sometimes too direct.

"I have always known that the time would come when Mrs. Carrington would need me. I have always held myself in readiness for her call."

"She needs you now," remarked Anne bluntly, "as she never will need you again, I'm thinking."

When Mallery went out into the night the air was heavy with a damp chill; broad, white snowflakes drifted down in an aimless and lifeless fashion from out of a moist blackness above that was infinitely depressing. Mallery had many cares; he bore with him continually the responsibility and the evidence of man's struggle between soul and body, life and death, but everything had gone from him to-night but the memory of Christina's face at the door and the lingering clasp of her hand as she passed down the steps to Hamilton's somewhat impatient reminder to her to hurry. He turned toward Broadway and the theater to which he knew they had gone, as if answering an unspoken appeal that was vitally insistent.

Anne was right. Christina needed him now. He had read Hamilton with the intuition of the practised student of human nature. Under no circumstances could Christina be happy with such a man. She would never be able to live up to concert pitch constantly, as Hamilton demanded. She was too fine.

But could she be happy with himself? God knew. He did not. He only knew that he would serve her and adore her and save her and care for her as long as he lived with his every thought and act.

Though a man of keen sensibility, Mallery was not a man of nerves, and yet, as he walked, Christina's sweet face seemed to rise before him out of the damp, depressing night and confront him with an insistent appeal, Christina's lingering touch, which still throbbed through his pulses, to quicken into a compelling demand for his presence. An urgent appeal!

He began to hurry his footsteps. A fire-engine dashed past him. He felt a sense of impending trouble, but he assured himself it was the night, the distress that had lived with him since Hamilton had first appeared. Other engines seemed to be rushing toward him, he could hear their hoarse whistles, and this time professional instinct stirred him, he might be needed. A man ran past him as he turned into Broadway, crying: "It's the Ismian Theater!"

Mallery never knew how he got there; but pushing, elbowing, crowding through police, people, firemen, he was one in that horror-stricken mass at the door of the theater. People were pouring from every exit, and policemen and firemen were shouting: "It's all over! The fire is out!"

In an eddy on the fringe of the moving crush at the main entrance, Mallery, with a sigh of relief, saw the tall form of Hamilton. By degrees he made his way over to him, but Christina was not there.

"Where's Mrs. Carrington?" Mallery asked sharply.

Hamilton looked down at him in a dazed fashion, drew his hand across his

brow, and shuddered. A young girl was clinging to him.

"I don't know," he answered vaguely, looking about him. "I only saw Margaret. I had to bring her out."

Mallery shook him. "Where's Christina?" he shouted. "Where did you leave her? Good God, man! Where is she?"

Hamilton looked at him as if he were drawing his thoughts from a great distance. He glanced down at the girl beside him, who was crying with nervous fright, shaking with terror that might once have touched Mallery's heart. Across Hamilton's face a wave of despair passed.

"I saw Margaret sitting down there with some women. I had just been down to talk to her, and had just got back to Christina, when we saw the fire on the stage, everybody saw it, and the panic began. Margaret put her arms out and cried to me. I jumped over the box and made my way to her and carried her out."

"But Christina?" Mallery's face was drawn with horror, and his voice struck the other man like a flail, sharp, rasping, quick, hurried.

"We were in the lower left-hand box." The voice was hardly more than a whisper sharpened with shame, and the averted eyes pictured despair.

Mallery found her. How, he never knew. When he had carried her to the air, out of the stifling, suffocating smoke, she opened her eyes and looked up into his face bending over her. She put up her hand and touched his cheek, as she whispered:

"I knew you would come. I knew it!"

Mallery drew her to him and kissed her, the odor of the crushed violets on her breast breathing an intoxicating perfume.



AROUND THE BRIDGE TABLE

By Arthur Loring Bruce



HERE are two delicious bridge stories going the rounds, which I trust may be new to my readers. A rubber is made up of two ladies—a mother and her daughter—and two visitors, who happen to be gentlemen. The scene is London. The ladies are very keen about the result of the game, but the gentlemen are a little bored and weary. It is sex against sex, and, so far, the fight has been fair. The mother has dealt and examined her hand very carefully.

"Oh, dear! Let me see! We are eighteen, aren't we, and the rubber game? Well, if I should happen to leave it to you, dear, and you should just happen to make it no trumps, and we could make the odd trick, we should win the rubber, shouldn't we? Well, I leave it to you, dear."

"No trumps," said the daughter, with alacrity.

"Oh, how lucky that you could make it!" said mama.

"Shall I play?" said the leader.

"Well, partner," said third hand. "We are six, aren't we? Now, if you should just happen to lead a club, and we were to make eight tricks, we should win the rubber, shouldn't we? Well, you may play."

Upon this, the leader opened with a singleton four of clubs. Dummy had three clubs to the queen, ten, three; and third hand had eight clubs to the ace, king, jack, and five small; and the dealer had the lone two-spot.

After making their eight tricks in clubs and scoring up the rubber, third hand turned to his partner and observed: "Oh, how lucky that you just happened to lead me a club."

The scenic setting of the other story is a murder trial in a New York criminal court. The yarn runs something as follows:

Prosecuting Attorney: Are you certain that the wealthy prisoner did not visit his residence that afternoon?

Prisoner's Lawyer: I am certain of it.

P. A.: Are you *absolutely* certain?

P. L.: Absolutely certain.

P. A.: Can you prove it?

P. L.: I can.

Judge (interrupting): Then please proceed to do so.

P. L.: I can produce absolute evidence to show that the prisoner was fully aware that, on the afternoon of the crime, his wife was to give a ladies' bridge party—for prizes."

Judge (solemnly): That is all.

The poor ladies! How they catch it from the comic papers! Very feebly and humbly, I should like to say that they often deserve it. I am sure that anybody who has watched a ladies' bridge tournament, for valuable prizes, will agree with me that there is more than a grain of truth in all these comic-supplement jibes.

A lady was once kind enough to explain the whole miracle to me very clearly. It seems that it is all due to woman's original sin. It is the result of a deep-rooted feminine depravity.

The lady went on: "Now, take my case, for example. I played in a tour-

nement only yesterday. I won at three tables and graduated to the last table—that reserved for the finalists. We sat down, cut for the deal, and began our struggle. The other players went into the tea-room or drove to their respective houses, leaving us four alone in the card-room. We all played fast, and fairly, and well. It was two rubbers all, and game all. So far no blood had been shed; there had not been a squabble, an insinuation, or an unkind word. A more quiet, ladylike contest you never beheld, and I am certain that all would have gone along smoothly to the end if the hostess had not, at that moment, perpetrated a despicable crime.

"She came into the room and put the prizes upon the table where we were playing, under our very eyes, and left them there. The prizes were lovely gold purses. Now, you know that I have plenty of money and any quantity of purses. I did not, as a matter of fact, need a purse at all, but those wretched golden things just sat there and glared at us. They hypnotized us all. It is useless to deny it. Women are intoxicated by such things.

"I assure you that our entire moral natures became twisted. We did things and said things and looked things that were positively criminal. A curious, psychological change came over us. I could have cheated or peeked or kicked my partner on the shins, and when, finally, she revoked and swore that she hadn't, I naturally took her side, being her partner, and that led to a terrible row. We were all on the point of coming to blows.

"Well, we lost, of course, and that nasty Bartlett woman and her odious sister got the purses, after all! I feel as if I never wanted to speak to them again. As I told you, I have two or three gold purses already, but I hated to see those Bartlett creatures winning such lovely prizes simply by cheating, for I am *almost* sure that that is what they did."

I recently heard a most astonishing story about good luck at bridge. It made me very envious, but, when I heard the facts of the case I was a lit-

tle less astonished. A lady in Baltimore assured me that she had won the odd trick, or more, in over fourteen hundred consecutive hands. I was incredulous, but she hastened to explain that she did not play the hands in the usual way—with a partner.

It seems that her husband is devoted to his club, where, like nearly all husbands, he merely goes "to read in the library and write letters." This leaves the poor lady a great deal alone in the evenings, and, being a close student of bridge, she gets out her table and deals the pack into four piles. She then arranges the cards a little, so that the imaginary adversaries won't get the best of her, and proceeds to play out the hand. If she finds that her opponents are too strong for her, she again changes the position of the cards, snatching an ace or two from her adversaries, tucking them in her own hand, and replacing the aces by useless twos and threes. In this way, but purely as a result of her skill, of course, she has vanquished her opponents—in about five months—over fourteen hundred times. They have never won a single hand.

This lady also tells the following true story about herself. She had not played the game very long before she was asked out to a bridge dinner, on St. Paul Street. A great card expert was at the dinner, and, after the feast, the usual telltale signs of the game were observed. Card-tables were brought—score-blocks and cigarettes.

She and her hostess were playing against the expert and the hostess' sister. The score was love all. The expert dealt and made it no trumps—with the ace of hearts, bare; the ace and two small diamonds; the ace and jack of spades; and seven clubs to the king, queen, jack. My friend looked at her hand and doubled, holding eight hearts to the king, queen, jack; the king and four of diamonds; the bare ace of clubs; and the king and queen of spades. Now, she had only to open her long heart suit in order to make eight certain tricks and the game, as she had a practically sure entry in every suit.

She became a trifle confused, however, and seemed to be in some uneasiness about her lead.

"Oh, dear," she said, "I really don't know how or what to lead!"

The expert was practically sure that she would not have doubled unless she had held the ace of clubs. Now, this was the only card that worried him. If he could get rid of that, the rest would be easy. "Well, Mrs. Blank," said he, "there is a very good rule to remember. When you are in doubt, always lead an ace and have a look around."

This seemed like excellent advice, so she confidently played out her ace of clubs. After this mortal error, it did not matter how she played. The dealer could always be sure of three by cards and the game. The expert was just sharp enough to try his little ruse, and he must have been delighted with its success.

An even more extraordinary story is told in the Whist Club, in New York, and, as I know two of the gentlemen who played in the game, I can vouch for its truthfulness. The tale is a little complicated, but I will attempt to make it clear. Some years ago four men were playing a rubber at high stakes—dollar points. The score was about even, and they were beginning the rubber game. It was A's deal, and as he was throwing around the cards third hand (Z) was called to the telephone. A little later he returned and said that he must go home at once on important business. He also added that he would prefer to transfer his money interest in the rubber to some one else, if it could be managed. He could not wait an instant, and left the club.

The three players then wandered around trying to get a man who could take Z's place. In the far corner of the library they came upon a very rosy gentleman who was sleeping audibly. He was, alas, intoxicated! They finally waked him up, however, and explained the matter to him. He said he would play, but he insisted on assuming Z's money interest in the game. This they agreed to, notwithstanding his condition, which was well-nigh maudlin.

No sooner had they all seated themselves than A picked up the cards, which he had dealt just before Z's departure, and declared no trumps on the king, queen, and seven of hearts; the ace and king of diamonds; two small clubs; and the ace and five other good spades. At this point B jumped up and went to the cigar-counter for a cigarette. While he was purchasing this, X, whose lead it was, doubled. He held seven clubs with the three top honors.

B now returned from his hunt for a cigarette, and, hearing that the make had been doubled, redoubled it in turn. It seems that he had stupidly supposed Z to be the doubler, and, seeing the ace of hearts and some little diamond strength in his hand, and knowing that A was not at all a rash maker, he had thought it wise to "lift the ante—just once." He looked at Z, and, to his horror, beheld that he was fast asleep. He now realized his blunder, but said nothing. Here X, who was a pretty daring gambler, looked at his seven clubs and went back at his opponents with another double.

The dealer, having sure control of all the suits, except the clubs, began to think a little! What had his partner—B, the dummy—redoubled on? Dummy must have the clubs well stopped, he argued, or he would not have redoubled. If his partner had the clubs, then he, A, was certain to win one or two by cards. He accordingly doubled back. The leader took one last plunge and redoubled again. Dummy, who now fully realized that it was the leader who had doubled and not the snoring third hand, said: "Enough," and the leader played his ace of clubs.

When Dummy's hand went down it contained three small clubs, to the ten. A united effort was now made to arouse Z from his deathlike slumber, but all to no avail. He was obviously *horse-de-combat*. The leader was a little nervous, but he finally showed his seven clubs, and claimed the odd, as, with three small clubs in the dummy, his clubs must all be good.

The dealer admitted the soft impeach-

ment, and it was decided to allow the leader and his sleeping partner the odd trick. Z was now carried to a sofa and permitted to go on with his much-needed rest. The rubber was added up. This odd trick alone made a difference of three hundred and eighty-four dollars; adding one hundred dollars for the rubber, and eighteen dollars, which was the difference in favor of X and Z before the doubling had begun, brought the total to five hundred and two dollars, checks for which amount were promptly and sorrowfully drawn by A and B.

A now went over to the sofa, stuffed his check in Z's pocket, and begged the card-room waiter to draw Mr. Z's attention to the check, as soon as he came out of his little doze. As it was very late, they all left the club, and the poor card-room waiter was left to "sit up with the body."

In the course of an hour or two Mr. Z opened his eyes, in deep wonder. Where was he? When the check was pointed out to him, he was slightly incredulous.

"Some mistake," he said. "I never even picked up my cards—much less played them."

"I can't say as to that, sir," said the boy, "but the gentlemen assured me that you had won the money, sir."

This is the only case I know of where a man has played a whole game of bridge, won over five hundred dollars, and never looked at one of his cards.

Speaking of the Whist Club, I am reminded of an extraordinary hand that was recently played there, and that caused an immense amount of discussion among New York bridge players. It was an instance, in actual play, of how a wrong lead sometimes helps the leader and his partner.

The dealer had left the make to dummy, who had declared no trumps, with the singleton king of clubs; king, jack of diamonds; ace, king, eight of hearts; ace, king, jack, ten, eight, seven, and four of spades.

The leader held ace, queen, jack, six, five, three of clubs; nine, two of dia-

monds; seven, five, four of hearts; and six and three of spades.

Third hand held seven, four, two of clubs; ace, queen, ten, eight, seven, six, three of diamonds; jack, ten of hearts; and two of spades.

The dealer held ten, nine, eight of clubs; five and four of diamonds; queen, nine, six, five, and three of hearts; queen, nine, and five of spades.

Here is a hand—the leader's—that should always be opened with the queen of clubs, as it lacks an entry card in another suit. The ace is a wretched opening, and no sound player would think of so opening the hand. This leader, however, was not a careful player, and he opened with his ace, which dropped the singleton king in the dummy. After the leader had made his six clubs, he allowed his partner to take seven tricks in diamonds, or a matter of a grand slam. Had he opened his hand *correctly*, that is, with the queen of clubs, the dealer and dummy would have made one club trick, five hearts, and seven spades, or a grand slam. In other words—play right, and you lose every trick; play wrong and you win every trick.

I shall now, for those who like such things, give a bridge problem, but I should advise very nervous or very aged people to avoid it as they would the deadly upas-tree. It is quite the most diabolical six-card puzzle that I know of, and is usually called the "Whitfeld" problem.

Hearts are trumps. Y is to lead, and, with Z for a partner, he is to get all six tricks against any possible defense that A and B can make. I have mercifully appended the solution of the problem at the end of this article. The hands were as follows:

Y (leader)—Jack, 10, 6, of clubs; queen of diamonds; 5, 4, of spades.

Z (Y's partner)—6, 3, of hearts; 8, 2, of clubs; ace, 9, of diamonds.

A—7, 4, 3, of clubs; 8, of diamonds; 6, 2, of spades.

B (A's partner)—9, 5, of clubs; king, 10, of diamonds; 7, 3, of spades.

Here is a bridge yarn that is now being told in Canada: "Tyro," in the Ot-

tawa *Evening Journal*, more or less vouches for the truth of it.

At a private house in Ottawa, between the rubbers, the hostess was remarking how well Mr. So-and-so played. "Yes," said a guest, "but he's very aggravating when he hums hymns all through the game."

"What on earth," said the hostess, "does he do that for?"

"Oh," replied the visitor jokingly, "that's so that his partner can know what to declare."

"Dear me," exclaimed the lady. "Now, if he had good hearts what would he hum?"

"As pants the heart for cooling streams," of course."

"Well, well, and suppose he had good spades?"

"In that case," said the visitor, "he chants 'The grave as little as my bed.'"

Then a happy thought struck the hostess. "Now, tell me," said she, "what can he possibly sing when he has a Yarborough."

"Simple, very simple," replied the joker. "He just tunes up with 'Nothing in my hand I bring.'"

Bridge stories about the King of England seem to have no end. Here is a new one. A very charming American widow went to England last year for her first visit. She was asked to a country house, where the king was also a guest. His majesty, who is a great admirer of feminine pulchritude, asked to play at the same table as the young American widow. They cut against each other, and the matter of stakes was soon under review.

"What, sir, would you like to lose, as I warn you that I am an extremely lucky player?"

The king's reply was to the point. "Not a penny, if I can help it—and how much do you want to win?"

"A sovereign, sir!" looking straight at the king.

"I can assure you, Mrs. Blank, that you won that the moment that my eyes first beheld you."

Before closing this little bundle of

bridge anecdotes and memories, I must say that I have been greatly impressed by the recent spread of "auction bridge." This game, as my readers probably know, is another form of bridge whist. It is much played in London, and I am glad to see that it is gaining so rapidly in favor in America. It is not as good a game as skat, but many people think it infinitely more amusing than bridge. Skat is, in some respects, the best card-game in the world. Those who declare it to be too difficult and scientific don't really know the game. It is, to be sure, a little more difficult than bridge, but the intellect that can grasp bridge can surely grasp skat. I should advise such of my readers as are tired of straight bridge to take up auction bridge or skat.

NOTE—*Solution of the six-card problem quoted in the body of this article.*

Trick I—Y, jack clubs; B, 5 clubs; Z, 8 clubs; A, 3 clubs.

(The 8 of clubs must be played here as, later, the 2 may have to be played up to the 10 and 6 in Y's hand.)

Trick II—Y, 4 spades; B, 3 spades; Z, 3 hearts; A, 2 spades.

Trick III—Z, 6 hearts; A, 8 diamonds; Y, queen diamonds; B, 7 spades.

(If, at this third trick, A discards the 6 of spades instead of the 8 of diamonds, Y must still discard his queen of diamonds. What is B to do now? If he discards his 9 of clubs he is lost. He is equally lost if he throws the 10 of diamonds. If he discards his 7 of spades he will put A in an impossible position at the next trick when the ace of diamonds will be led—a position in which A will have to give up the ship. The 7 of spades is, on the whole, B's only possible discard.)

Trick IV—Z, ace diamonds.

(Here, if A throws the 6 of spades, Y must discard the 6 of clubs. If A throws the 4 of clubs, then Y must discard the 5 of spades. In any event, Y and Z can take every trick.)

WASHBURN'S QUEST

By
Quentin M. Drake



THE cup-shaped valley which contained the United States army post of Tarlaginan was baking under the pitiless sun toward the end of a Philippine dry season. The mountains that surrounded it trembled and jigged in the heat-waves. From a cool green, the foliage that covered them had turned lighter and grayer in tone; the occasional hot breezes that passed through evoked a sort of whirring rattle, dry as the song of a locust. But even these breezes were most infrequent. Almost always the cook-shed chimneys sent their smoke unwaveringly upward in a feathery column, which at last was absorbed into the skim-milk blue of a cloudless sky; and the colors hung, limp and motionless, on their staff.

The post was quiet, very quiet, yet there were signs that proved it awake. The sun flashed and glittered on treble the usual number of bayonets as sentries turned at the end of their beats to retrace their steps. Machine guns, limbered and without their jackets, stood ready, except for the horses, to whirl into immediate action at any point where they might be needed.

Everything indicated that an enemy was feared, and that the camp was prepared to repel this enemy with all its strength. And so it was. Asiatic cholera knows no friends and desires no allies save those of ignorance and filth,

but even these two are not essential. Some time before it had appeared in Manila, and we at Tarlaginan had heard it was spreading.

At first, however, we had no fear. Manila is a long way from the remote spot of earth that held us. Moreover, though there never had been much communication between the two places, we set ourselves to stop all of it, except that which came through the rigidly inspected government steamer which, at long intervals, brought us our mails and supplies. Having thus done our best, we hoped that the enemy had been barred from our shores.

God alone knows how it reached those shores. Possibly by some becalmed fishing *prao*, which eluded the guards and put in for water. But reach them it did, one day after the doctors had finished their morning inspection of the native village that surrounded us. When accidentally discovered at nightfall, it had been hard at work, and was well entrenched in its position.

At first the doctors had worked hard and thanklessly, as doctors almost always will, to stamp out the disease from among the natives, but from the first their work was hopeless. So at last my old friend, General Redfield, our commanding officer, most reluctantly ordered that the natives—to their intense relief, for they did not approve of American methods—be left to their own devices, and that a cordon of steel and potential lead be drawn closely around us.

Days passed, and then weeks. By virtue of constant vigilance and the hardest of continuous work, our quarantine held. Into the area circumscribed by the cordon of guards the pestilence had not entered.

I was the post quartermaster. Little of this quarantine work, and less of the responsibility attending it, fell to my share. Therefore, it came to pass that I, unlike the other officers, aided by a code of more or less fatalistic philosophy, which long has been my guide, was enabled to remain comparatively untroubled, looking from something like a spectator's standpoint upon the apprehension and strain which were bringing those around me daily nearer and nearer to their "limit of elasticity," as the engineers say. To prevent rousing in behalf of these others sympathies of mine which, while powerless to aid or even to comfort them, still caused me the keenest mental distress, was my hardest task. The code to which I have referred helped somewhat, it is true, but not much.

Especially did the philosophy fail me when, one day, poor Redfield dragged himself wearily to that part of the convent veranda which I call mine. I had not seen him to talk with since the trouble began until then; he had been too busy. Therefore it struck me with a shock that these few weeks had added at least ten years to his apparent age. Nodding to me, he sat down heavily in a long chair that I pushed toward him, pulled a cigar from his pocket, and leaned back with a sigh.

"Well, how's it going?" I asked, with an attempt at cheeriness.

He examined his cigar deliberately, bit off the end and lighted it before replying.

"Bad," said he. "Very bad. It's wearing the life out of every officer in this post, Drake—except you—and the men aren't much better. It's those poor devils of natives outside there that get worst on my nerves. It seems such a brutal thing to let them die, but there's nothing else we can do. Not that they wanted our interference, for they resisted, passively, everything we tried to

do for them. Still, I feel as though we ought to coerce them for their own good. I wouldn't mind not having the authority to do it; the point is that we haven't the medicines or disinfectants that would be enough for ourselves if the cholera should get a hold here. The last steamer brought none; they're out of such things in Manila, and won't have any until the return of a destroyer they sent to Hongkong for fresh supplies."

"Of course, our first duty is to the men we have under us," said I, trying to bring my philosophy to bear.

"I know. That's all very true," he admitted. "All the same, though, it's hard to see a lot of these poor native beggars—and their women and children, too, mind you—dying when they might be saved. Besides, our obvious course, if we could do it, would be to clear the disease out of the district. As it is, it's practically certain to break in here sooner or later. Then think of our own women and children—think of Philly!"

"We can but do our best," said I tritely. "The rest——"

"Is in the hands of God," finished Redfield, and I looked up in astonishment.

Never but once before had I known him to speak in this way; that was when the body of Jack, his son, had been brought back to him from the spot where Apaches had massacred the boy and his little command. Redfield, though deeply religious in his reticent way, was not apt to lean even upon the Deity until every resource of his own was exhausted. But I knew that nothing in the world could so move him as the fear that any harm might come to his adored granddaughter, Jack's child, Philly, just now grown to early womanhood. To show anything like emotion, however, he would have deemed a disgrace.

Probably to prevent such a possibility, he rose, and, drawing his field-glasses from their case, stood by the veranda rail, looking out over the parade-ground to a spot, just outside our lines, where the day before a row of

native houses had stood. Now their site could be distinguished only by a slightly increased activity of the heat-waves there. A pint or so of kerosene poured on a thatched roof just before a match is touched to it is rather a strenuous method of disinfecting a house, but, in default of others, an effective one.

Redfield lowered his glasses in order to acknowledge the salute of Brinsley, one of the majors, who had started up the steps. Half-way up he stopped, and, frowning, gazed long and steadily in the direction from which he had come. Curious as to what interested him, I got out of my chair and went to the edge of the veranda. I could see nothing, except that Washburn, a young captain, was walking slowly toward us. He was in khaki, and wore his saber.

"It's criminal to put that poor beggar Washburn on guard," said Brinsley, under his breath, to me. "I can't see what they were thinking of—especially at a time like this."

Low as his tone had been, the words did not escape the sharp ears of Redfield, who turned instantly. "Should not have been put on guard? Why not?" he demanded.

"Look at him, sir—through your glasses," returned Brinsley simply.

My own glasses lay on a table just inside a near-by window. Catching them up, I focused them on Washburn, who still was some distance away. What I saw really shocked me. We all knew the age of this man; his captaincy had been brought him by the wave of promotion that came during and directly after the Spanish war. He was thirty-one. Yet the man I saw might have owned to almost any age—sixty—more. His haggard face was drawn and strained and seamed as though by years; apparently unseeing, his eyes stared widely ahead, like those of a somnambulist, and his hands twitched as though he were powerless to control them. His lips moved constantly as he muttered to himself.

"Why these damned pill-men let him out—released him even from surveil-

lance—I can't think," Brinsley went on. "I suppose that when the cholera appeared, it entirely filled what they probably would call their minds, so they forgot. They can't hold more than one idea at a time, and it takes a convention of the whole of 'em to evolve that one idea."

Now, I knew that, as a matter of fact, Brinsley was possessed of an exceedingly kind heart, of which he appeared to be bitterly ashamed, and by the fact that his language was rather more outrageously cynical than usual, I became aware that this inconveniently soft heart had been moved to pity for the wreck of a man who walked down the path. Any one would have been. Redfield even forgot the reprimand which ordinarily would promptly have followed an imputation upon the medical corps or any other branch of the service. Redfield's dread of wronging any man or body of men, even in thought, was almost morbid, but nevertheless was one of the many reasons why officers and men alike loved him, martinet though he undoubtedly was.

"I—I fear you're right, Brinsley," he said. "I hope you're not. With all my heart I hope you're wrong, but I fear you aren't. Yet, the doctors told me that a return to duty was the best treatment the poor fellow could have. That seemed logical to me. There's nothing in the world so good as hard work for one laboring under a great mental strain; I've always found that."

"Work which takes a mental effort to perform—yes, sir," agreed Brinsley. "But just look at this case. Washburn, counting his time in the Academy, has probably been twelve years or thereabouts in the service. Military routine work has grown to be a second nature to him. He could go through with it in his sleep, and it's about as entralling to his mind as plain knitting would be to an old woman from Connecticut. And, besides, it would take work far more absorbing than any I know of to take a man's mind off such trouble as that poor Washburn has seen."

We all were silent for a little after Brinsley finished. What he said cer-

tainly was true. Even the most mind-compelling work imaginable—even the rush and shock of a cavalry charge—could hardly divert thoughts such as those which dwelt with Washburn.

When Washburn came to Tarlaginan with his young wife and their one child, a little girl of three years, the bands of armed natives which formerly had infested the surrounding hills had been cleared away. But some individual members of these bands there were whose many and notorious crimes made surrender and consequent immunity impossible. The pursuit of these fugitives had long made an excellent and attractive substitute for practise-marches. No one dreamed that any of them would venture near the post, of all places in the world—the post, where the grim, red gallows stood ready and waiting for any who were caught.

Once, when Washburn was out with his company on one of the scouts through the hills, and little Alice was asleep, Mrs. Washburn took it into her head to walk into the woods which crept up almost to the post confines. No one thought of warning her; there occurred to no one any thought of danger. Yet some one of those outlaws must have been lurking near. At least, we supposed so from the state in which the body was found. We never knew. There are other details, but it is not worth while to go into them.

Nor is it worth while to describe the scene we all would like to forget, but cannot, when poor Washburn came swinging in with his men, hot, tired, and triumphant, bringing with them the *ladron* they had been chasing. For very many weary days the young captain lay raving on the bed to which he was strapped. For many more he lay there, too weak to move, after the delirium had exhausted both itself and him. At last he came forth, a gaunt, hollow-eyed wreck, but apparently sane except for the one delusion that his wife was not dead; that she only had hidden in play out somewhere among the trees, and when once she knew how she had frightened him, she would return.

As gently as they could, the doctors

tried to set him right, and apparently they succeeded. I am confident, however, that with insane cunning he merely hid this delusion, and that, nevertheless, it was with him always. His fierce jealousy concerning Alice, his little daughter, was to me one proof of this; another and stronger one was the fact that both Philly and Alice, with their respective keen intuitions of budding woman and little child, feared and shrank from him. Yet he was gentleness itself with them when he noticed them at all.

In an army post there are apt to be much gossip, backbiting, and many petty intrigues; yet no community in the world, perhaps, can show more ready and hearty sympathy with one when the time of trouble comes. Little Alice always had been petted by every one in the post. When the tragedy occurred which left her motherless, the quarters of every married officer was a home for her, where she was cared for by turns.

But after he had recovered enough to be about, Washburn had turned fiercely on these foster-mothers. He seemed to have an idea that they were trying to steal, during the real mother's temporary absence, her child's allegiance. Philly, probably on account of her seventeen years, was the sole exception to this suspicion of his. So Philly, to her intense delight, was enabled to take the child in and care for her, as before she had taken and cared for numberless derelicts of the lower animals, but never a human child, and such a lovable one—one that might well rouse the maternal instincts of a person far less richly endowed in this respect than was Philly.

No young pullet with a newly acquired, alien chick ever was more motherly than Philly, and, save for an occasional plaintive query about the mother left forever by so fearful a road, little Alice accepted her without question. It was pretty to see the two together, and just then they gave us the opportunity. They had been visiting, apparently, for Alice was dressed in her ruffly best. First Lieutenant Pendale,

of the Ninety-ninth Cavalry, Redfield's old regiment, was with them. That fact astonished no one. The habit of being where Philly was had so grown on Tommy Pendale that at last, with many misgivings begotten by her youth, Redfield had given his formal consent that this habit should continue through life.

Washburn passed along the path directly below us without looking up, and went on. Redfield, with more trouble in his face even than before, stood looking after him. Brinsley had retired to a chair and apparently composed himself to slumber. My philosophy teaches me that it is always better, when possible, to look on the pleasant sights which now and then present themselves. I nudged my commanding officer.

"Coming events cast their shadows before"—eh, Redfield?" said I, with a wag of my head toward the approaching group of three.

The two older ones, in earnest conversation as they almost always were, talked across the tiny girl who, with her yellow curls bobbing, walked solemnly between them, one of their hands tightly clasped in each of hers. Redfield's face softened as he looked. Once Pendale said something that brought the color rushing into the clear olive of Philly's beautiful face, and she turned it away from him, that he might not see. As she did so, she surreptitiously lifted her left hand to her lips, and I knew that she kissed the new ring that sparkled there. I own that I felt a sharp pang at the sight, and that I wished Tommy Pendale—who, by the way, I thoroughly liked—well, say at some other army post. But pang and wish I put sternly from me, as the jaundiced vagaries of a lonely old bachelor, who resented the coming of the woman who was displacing the long-legged tomboy, who came to him with the troubles she dared not tell her grandfather, and whom he dearly loved.

Philly saw us standing on the veranda, and, waving her hand, quickened her steps.

"Do you mind very much lunching without us to-day, Dad's Dad?" she called, as soon as she was close enough.

"No, my dear; not if you wish to lunch elsewhere," responded Redfield obediently. "Where are you going?"

"To the Jack Grestons'. Marion sent over and asked Alice and me—but not Tommy. So he's going as far as the gate to see us off, he says," replied Philly, smiling happily up at us. "Do you mind?"

"Of course I don't mind. I'll get a bite here, if your Uncle Quent will give it to me. But I'm afraid I'll have to borrow that boy of yours, Philly. As you'll probably see each other again after luncheon, I think you'll both manage to survive."

Philly laughed, blushed again, and passed on with Alice as Pendale sprang up the steps.

"You want me, sir?" he said to Redfield, saluting.

Redfield looked to see that Philly was out of hearing. "Pendale, has Philly said anything to you about poor Washburn?" he then asked.

"Yes, sir. She's afraid of him. She thinks that since—since his illness he hasn't been quite himself. And really, sir, I fear she's right. His quarters adjoin mine, you know, and I can't help hearing the way he goes on when he's alone. Not that he ever offers to do anything wrong," Pendale hastened to add. "It's the way he looks and mumbles to himself that makes Philly afraid of him on Alice's account. I don't think Philly knows what it is to be frightened on her own," he finished proudly.

"I don't believe she does," concurred Philly's grandfather heartily. "But, see here, my boy; Washburn's a friend of yours, isn't he?"

"He was, sir. They both were before—before it happened, you know."

"But now you can't tell. I understand. Nevertheless, I want you to pick up that friendship again, if you can. Keep an eye on him. Keep him away from Philly and the little girl until we can see what had best be done."

Don't let Philly know—don't let any one know—what I've told you to do. Be sure about that. If the poor lad should turn out to be a little unhinged, but only temporarily, you can see how important it is that there should be no blot on his military record, you know. That's the reason that I call for such absolute secrecy. You understand, don't you?"

"Yes, sir. I'll do my best."

"I know you will, my boy. And it will take all your time as well as all your tact, I fear. Tell your troop captain that you're excused from all other duty for the present. As you pass my office, just send the orderly there, with my compliments, to Doctor Carpenter, and ask him if he'll be good enough to step over here. I'd like to consult him. That's all, I think."

Pendale, his naturally grave face impassive, left without a word.

"He's a good boy," said Redfield, and sank back into a chair, looking so tired and worn that it troubled me and made me irritable.

"Of course he's a good boy," I snapped. "But do you happen to remember that he just marched off guard this morning? Do you recall the extra work that for weeks you've given him in addition to his own? And now you set him to taking care of a lunatic, and tell him he's to do it without the knowledge of that lunatic or any one else except us four. He can't do it. No one could. And he can't stand this strain much longer. No one could. You'll kill the lad if you keep on."

I have always held that a friend is of little use unless one can quarrel with him when occasion seems to demand it, and for more years than I cared to count, Redfield and I had been accustomed to indulge in this evidence of friendship, quite ignoring the fact that he ranked me. But this time he failed me.

"Good heavens, Drake! You don't really think so, do you?" he asked quickly, looking up at me. "Why, I'd a thousand times rather cut off my right hand than harm that boy. If he really was my own grandchild, by blood, as

Philly is, and not merely by marriage, as he is to be, I hardly could think more of him."

I knew all this before. I knew, too, that his way of showing regard for any man usually took the form of giving him work, and yet more work to do, and by preference the most difficult work he could find. His distress made me ashamed of myself, and therefore put me in a worse humor than before.

Besides, Brinsley, who, though so much younger than Redfield or me, yet had come to be accepted by us both as a sort of wordless referee, who never was appealed to in our numerous discussions, and whose sole comment was an occasional chuckle, which answered every purpose—Brinsley, I say, was lying back in his chair apparently asleep. So I went off into my office, which opened onto the veranda, and began to go over my quarterly returns.

These papers, from a literary point of view, were not especially interesting, but I discovered an error which helped hold for a while my attention. I was recalled to outside affairs by the wheezing of old Doctor Carpenter—he was a lieutenant-colonel, but I never can reconcile myself to the fashion, now becoming quite general, of calling medical men by the titles of their military grade—by the wheezing of old Carpenter's overfed body and the creak of a wicker chair as he dropped into it.

While I by no means shared Brinsley's low opinion of the medical corps as a whole, I never had thought much of this individual member, and now, on hearing Redfield's first question to him, I resigned myself to the usual platitudes which I felt sure would come in reply. But in this I was disappointed. No platitudes came from Carpenter's lips that day.

"Whether Washburn is quite sane or not I don't know—frankly, I don't know," said he. "I didn't examine him myself. I took the reports of those who had. They pronounced him sane. But as things go, I fear it isn't of much consequence."

"Not of much consequence! I don't

understand. What do you mean?" demanded Redfield.

"I mean that one crazy man more or less in the post won't make much difference, if this sort of thing goes on, as it will. An hour ago a case of cholera was found in the infantry barracks, and since then two more in E Company. All three men will die. Of course, all the men know it—to keep it from them was impossible. And now those chaps who would cheerfully storm hell and come out on the other side, if it was held by an enemy they could see, are on the verge of panic. They're worse than a lot of schoolgirls. It's the fright, as much as the disease, that'll kill them. Lord! But I don't like to think of what the post will be like this day week unless the rains come."

"What good will the rains do?" I heard Brinsley ask.

"Lessen the force of the epidemic. I don't know just how; no one does. Separates the germs more widely, I suppose, and washes them into the sea, where the salt water kills them."

"What must we do?" asked Redfield sharply.

I was out on the veranda in time to hear the doctor's reply.

"Do? Just the best we can," he said, rising wearily. "If the line can do anything to help, I'll let you know, general. Thus far, though, the fight is one for the medical corps to attend to. And I must be getting back to it."

Wearily he rose and went down the steps. Brinsley and I stood watching the paunchy figure as it waddled across the dusty parade-ground, its face resolutely turned toward the row of shacks that had been thrown into one and prepared for a hospital. Even as we looked, the white flag with its Geneva cross slowly descended from the bamboo staff, and a moment later a yellow cloth drooped in its place. Carpenter reached the hospital door and disappeared within. Brinsley sighed as he turned away.

"I never had a high opinion of old Carpenter," said he. "I thought he was a fussy old woman. I think so still. Yet I'm hanged if there wasn't a sort

of dignity about him just now. I can't understand it. I wouldn't have believed it possible."

"He's going into action in his own way. Any man is dignified by that," replied Redfield.

There was a long pause, which at last I broke.

"Anyhow, there's one thing we can be thankful for," said I, determined to drive my policy of optimism as far as it would go. "That is, we know where we stand. The worst has come; there can't be anything more."

"There's a whole lot of trouble more that can come without half trying," grunted Brinsley. "Over there is a little bunch of it that's on its way right now, if I'm not mistaken."

He pointed at Pendale, who was coming toward us in double time. Behind him trotted a private of infantry, who evidently was one of the guard, for he wore his belt and bayonet. Redfield rose and stepped to the veranda rail.

"Well?" he asked, with strained attention, as soon as they came close enough.

"Matter enough, I fear, sir," replied Pendale, halting. "Ever since you sent me out, I have been looking for Captain Washburn, but have been unable to find him. I first got news from Private Billings. The officer of the day relieved him from post at my request, and I brought him here. He can tell what happened better than I."

Pendale stood aside, and the private, white under his tan, stood attention, saluted, and began his tale.

"I was walking number fourteen, sir. I hadn't been posted long. We'd heard in the guard-house what had happened in the barracks, an' it shook us up some, but I was walkin' post, all right. Yet, when Cap'n Washburn come, he was 'most atop o' me 'fore I seen him. He was walkin' kinder funny, and talkin' funny, too, to the little girl——"

"Little girl!" almost shouted Redfield. "You mean his little girl? Little Miss Alice?"

"Yes, sir; little Miss Alice. He had her in his arms, an' I thought that looked funny, too. He was talkin' to

her, an' she looked like she was scared. She wasn't cryin', but her under lip stuck out, kinder tremblin', an' her eyes was round an' wet. Now'n ag'in she'd put her hand up to his face, like she wanted to find out if he was really her dad. He said sunth'n to her. I couldn't make out jus' what, but it sounded like he said he was lookin' fer somebuddy, an' that him an' her would find the somebuddy together before the cholera did. He was actin' funny, like I said, sir, but he was an orf'cer of the guard, an' I couldn't but let him pass my post if he wanted to. An' that's all, sir."

"Which way did he go?"

"Down that road what leads to the woods, sir, the last I see of him."

Redfield ripped out one of the oaths that were so rare with him, but for that reason so forceful when they did come. We all of us were startled, but on the private the effect was most demoralizing. Already frightened, he now came close to a panic. His jaw dropped, he stepped back a pace or two, and half turned, as though to run. His fright brought Redfield to himself.

"You're in no way to blame, Billings," he said kindly. "Not yet, that is. Not unless you repeat what you just now told. You're not to talk. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir, I do. Indeed, I do."

"Very good. You may go."

Billings went, wasting no time about it. Redfield turned to Pendale.

"How did Washburn get the child—do you know?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. Philly and Mrs. Greston left her asleep and went out, leaving a native *muchacha* in charge. Washburn came in and took her."

"Does Philly know?"

"No, sir. Mrs. Greston does. Philly hasn't gone back to the house yet."

"She mustn't know. Not until the child is recovered. It would drive her frantic. Washburn ought to be found easily. He undoubtedly is looking for his wife there in the woods, where he thinks she's hiding. Probably he'll call to her, and can be heard."

I knew well that Redfield wanted

Pendale to take up the search, and felt sure that after what I had said he would give no order to that effect. But even had he wished to do so, there would have been little opportunity.

"I'll be ready to continue my search within five minutes, sir," said Pendale quietly.

"Good!" exclaimed Redfield, beaming. "Can you pick out men who won't talk?"

"I won't take any men, sir, if you don't mind. It would only expose them to infection outside, and I think I can do it quite as well alone."

For a moment Redfield hesitated, but for a moment only. "Do as you think best, my boy," he said. "Don't take your own mount, though; come here and get a quartermaster's horse from Colonel Drake. That will raise fewer questions than to take your own from the stables. I'll go and see Mrs. Greston now. She must refuse to allow Philly to come into her house, on the ground that the little one is down with measles or something of the sort. I dislike to deceive her. I never did before. But it's the only way, now."

He hurried down from the veranda and toward the Greston quarters, speaking even as he went. Pendale went to complete what few arrangements he had to make before he left. I ordered the best horse in my corrals to be brought around, but before the order could be obeyed, Pendale appeared, ready to go, his saddle, with its bags ready packed, over his arm. He eased it onto the veranda, and sat down on the top step to wait.

"I wonder if the general would mind if I said 'good-by' to Philly before I went," he said wistfully, after a little.

"I doubt if you'll have much choice in the matter—as you'll see, if you look over your shoulder," I responded dryly.

He looked, and saw, as I had seen, Philly hurrying up the path toward the convent, signals of distress showing in her pale face and the query in her big eyes, opened wide. The horse for which I sent was brought around, and one of my men was saddling him as Pendale went down the steps to meet her. She

caught him by the arm and dragged him back to the veranda, pouring forth questions and remonstrance.

"Where's Alice? Where's Dad's Dad?" she cried. "I can't find out, and I want to know. I want to know *now*. Marion wouldn't let me into the house. Is it true that Alice is ill? Where are you going, Tommy? Tell me—tell me this *instant!* I *can't* stand any more. I know something has happened. What is it?"

Her eyes were blazing, her cheeks flushed. She was anxious, very; and her anxiety had roused her temper, as anxiety so often does. I never had seen her look more beautiful as she stood there, but it was the beauty such as a fury might have. Pendale was distinctly at a loss. He tried to speak, but it was not much of an attempt, so I took it up.

"No one can answer all those questions in one breath, Philly," said I. "I don't know where your grandfather is now; he was here a moment ago. He said something about Alice being ill, and he mentioned measles. Most likely he'll be back here directly."

Though I spoke with all the apparent ingenuousness I could summon, Philly did not seem to be impressed, but only glanced at me sharply.

"Dad's Dad isn't coming here if he knows I'm here. He wants to keep out of my way," said she. "There's something he's trying to keep from me—something I ought to know, for it concerns Alice and Tommy. I know Dad's Dad. And I know you, too, Uncle Quent; there's no use in either of you trying to deceive me. Tommy, where are you going?"

"Your—the general told me—sent me on an errand, Philly," stammered poor Pendale. He did not wish to refuse an answer to any question of hers.

"Where?"

"That I can't say, dear," responded he gravely, cornered at last. "I would if I could. You know that. But I can't. And I must go now."

"Where is it you must go?" demanded Philly again, in a voice that was singularly harsh and dry for her.

"I told you I couldn't say, Philly. Don't make it so hard for me, dear. Won't you say good-by?"

His tone was infinitely pleading, but for once it met with no response in her. Never before had I known her in such a mood. It was the mental strain and worry, I suppose, that caused it. With a quick movement she drew his ring from her finger and held it toward him.

"Good-by," she said shortly.

He made no offer to take the ring, but stood there staring at her, as though the bottom had dropped out of his universe, which doubtless was the case. After waiting for a moment, she slipped the ring into a pocket of his khaki blouse; then whirled into my office and left him. He started as I have seen men start when a bullet struck them. But then he pulled himself together, and, walking slowly down the steps, he mounted, and without a word and without once looking back he rode away.

I was in a very bad temper myself with Redfield, and this useless mystery of his. Of course, he meant it all for the best, but it would have saved so much trouble for all concerned had he told her in the first place, instead of making this clumsy effort to shield her.

At that moment he returned, and it afforded me the greatest pleasure to tell him what had happened, and exactly what I thought of the whole proceeding. He heard me without interruption to the end.

"Where is she now?" he asked, as I finished.

I preceded him into the office. She had seated herself in a chair, her folded arms resting on a table before her, and her head pillowled in them so that we could not see her face. She was not crying, as I expected to find her, or at least there were no signs of it.

"Philly," said Redfield, touching her. She wriggled her shoulder from under his hand as a sulky child might have done. "Philly—why, Philly, my little girl!" he went on, in gentle reproof. "Don't you know that all I wanted was to shield you when I told them not to

tell you what had happened? It's very sad, dear, but no great mystery. I think, perhaps, it's better you should know now."

With a suddenness which startled us both, Philly sprang from her chair, seated her grandfather, with considerable violence, in her place, dropped on his knees, and, throwing her arms around his neck, began sobbing her heart out on his shoulder. Her tears made spots of verdigris on the silver-plated star that decorated the strap of his yellow blouse. I saw them there later. Long experience in her ways had taught him the futility of attempting to stem the tide with words, and he waited until she was a little more calm, and then told her, as gently as he could, all that had taken place.

She was not crying when he finished, and it was a tearless face that she showed when at last she rose from his knee.

"So you sent him out there among all those natives to get that horrible sickness, and die all alone, so that I'll never, never be able to tell him that I see now how wicked I was, and ask him to forgive me," she said, in a tone that was hard and even. "I don't see how I ever can forgive you, Dad's Dad."

She turned and went out of the office, and to her own room, where she shut herself in with her grief, leaving us to the troubles that crowded upon us thick and fast.

The next few days were all that Carpenter had predicted, and more. The men sickened in shoals, so that the hospital accommodations soon were inadequate, and additional shelter had to be extemporized. This strained my department to the utmost, and mercifully took all my time, so that there was little chance for me to think.

But at the end of three days the work was finished, and once more I was idle, sitting in a window of my office, looking through field-glasses at the funerals from the native town as, with the mat-wrapped corpses lashed to bamboo-poles for transportation, they passed in endless procession to their little cemetery.

It was not an enlivening pastime, and, in spite of all that philosophy could do to aid, my spirits sank. Only one thing had occurred that raised any hope. Early the morning before banks of dark clouds had tumbled up from the horizon and spread over the sky. They stayed in the sky, darkening the sun so there was a dismal sort of twilight, but apparently they were as dry as so much smoke. Not a drop of moisture fell to herald the rains. There was not any dew, even.

Redfield came and sat himself down, adding to the general gloom. Philly still remained locked in her room, he told me. Mary, her old nurse, had been admitted once or twice, and had brought out most discouraging reports. Nothing had been heard of Pendale. It is true that he had taken provisions for five days with him, but, nevertheless, his not having made any sign was not good news, and might readily imply almost any disaster.

Having unburdened himself of this cheering intelligence, Redfield sat and smoked in silence, looking unhappy. It made me more blue than ever to see him. I got to feel that any event, even a calamity, would be a relief. And just then one came.

A corporal of the guard appeared in the doorway, saluting, and with his other hand holding toward me a note that smelled to heaven of carbolic acid.

"It come on Lootenant Pendale's horse, sir," said he. "Leastways, the one he rode when he went out. It jus' come in, without no saddle, and with this here note fast to the headstall. You needn't fear to take it, sir. I dipped it in the dope-bucket before I brought it."

I snatched that triangular bit of paper. I would have snatched it had I been able to see cholera-germs squirming all over it, for I recognized the writing. So did Redfield.

"Read it, Drake! Read it out, man!" he cried. "It's from Pendale—don't you see?"

With eager fingers I fumbled at the paper, but before I could get it open, Philly had caught it from my hand.

Neither of us had seen her come in. Her face was whiter than I would have believed possible, and her eyes seemed larger than ever—impossibly large, some way.

"I saw the corporal coming, and I knew, somehow, that the note was from Tommy, so I came," said she; then unfolded the paper and read:

DEAR COLONEL DRAKE: I write to you instead of reporting, as otherwise I should do, to General Redfield, because in the latter case I feared that Philly might be with him, and that it would then be difficult to keep anything from her.

I have found Washburn. He has the cholera and is in a bad way. Alice already has gone.

We need a doctor here, and medicines. And something must be done at once about what is left of poor little Alice.

We are in a hut just outside the lines. You can see it from the convent windows, and in order to enable you to identify it, I have hung out my handkerchief, tied to a stick. Washburn in his wanderings must have turned back to the post.

I am all right.

Faithfully,

T. R. PENDALE.

Philly refolded the note and tucked it into the bosom of her frock. "How soon can we go?" she asked, turning to her grandfather.

"As soon as we get word to a doctor," he reluctantly replied, moistening his dry lips with his tongue. "Will you lend me a man to send, Drake?"

"Redfield, you don't mean to say that you're lunatic enough to let Philly go into that pest-hole that Pendale speaks of, do you?" I cried, but at the same time my heart sank. I knew that I might as well have saved my breath.

"It is her right," he said slowly. "The troth she plighted gives her the right to go, if she will."

The doctor was some time in coming. Neither Redfield nor Philly was willing to wait, so I stuffed into my pocket some medicine I always kept handy, and followed them as they hurried through the lines to the hut where the handkerchief plainly showed.

It was not far away, and soon—far too soon, I thought—we stood by its basket-work door. Philly gave a little

gasp as Redfield opened it, and we entered.

Comparatively speaking, it was dark inside, and for a few seconds I could see nothing; then the various objects began to define themselves. I shall never forget that picture. On the floor to one side, still dressed in the little bell-frilled frock, now draggled and stained, Alice lay as though asleep, her sweet little face tranquil and almost smiling, her head on her arm. In his shirt-sleeves Pendale bent over a native bed, where Washburn lay, covered by a saddle-blanket and pillow'd on Pendale's blouse. A wind had rustled through the trees and drowned any sound that our entrance had made, so he did not hear us until Philly, with a cry, sprang toward him. He turned like a flash.

"Philly—here!" he gasped. "Don't come near me—don't! It's dangerous! Don't, dear—keep away!"

He saw his duty, and did it nobly. I think he honestly tried to hold her off, but somehow she got within his arms and clung there. So all he could do was to take her to the door, as far as possible from the sick man. I don't suppose they either of them so much as remembered that either Redfield or I existed, but that sort of a scene, generally supposed to be enacted in private, if at all, was most embarrassing for a modest old bachelor like myself, and I think that Redfield was affected in very much the same way. At all events, we both turned toward the bed where Washburn lay.

Evidently the poor fellow was near his end. At first I thought the end had come, so gaunt and white and motionless was he, as with closed eyes he lay there. A wet breeze swept through the door and across the face of the sick man. His eyes opened and his lips moved. I bent down to catch the faintly uttered words.

"I must find her," he said.

Then, with an effort, he turned away. A moment later Redfield drew his handkerchief over the face, and I knew that through the blessed rains that were to wash away the pestilence, Washburn had continued his quest.

IN AMBUSH

By Marie Van Vorst

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

"Bill" Flanders, a member of a mining camp in the Klondike, is denounced as a highwayman and general bad man by young Scranton, who has been a lover of Flanders' wife. The next morning Scranton is found dead in his cabin, and Flanders, although hitherto a general favorite, and his wife are driven from camp. Some years later Sydney Adair, a fabulously rich American, turns up in Egypt, leads a brilliant cavalry charge in the Sudan, and saves the life of a young English officer, Captain Maccerdene. A man named Moody witnesses the charge and writes to a Robert Scranton in Cairo that it was Bill Flanders who led it. Then Moody dies. Maccerdene's cousin and betrothed, Helena Desprey, with her aunt, comes to the point on the Nile where the young officer lies wounded. She and Adair meet and Helena falls in love with the American. On his side, Adair falls desperately in love with Helena, but he goes off into the desert without telling her of it. Afterward she receives a letter from him, delivered by Scranton who has met him in a sand storm. The whole party returns to America, and Adair also turns up at Helena's home in Kentucky. Scranton, who has been paying desperate court to Helena, suspects Adair of being Bill Flanders and the murderer of his brother, but cannot prove it. The engagement between Helena and Maccerdene is broken. Adair then tells Helena the unvarnished story of his life, and she, in a tempest of emotion, rushes away from him.

PART FOUR.

CHAPTER VIII.

HE window on the veranda was a long one, and Adair went over to it, opened it, and stepped out. The early November evening, clear and cool and fresh, was welcome, and if anything could have soothed him, the air blowing over the pines would have brought balm. He heard the hoofs of a horse on the gravel, and saw Scranton dismount and give his mount to a colored boy.

"The ladies," Adair told him as Scranton came up, "have gone to dress. Come in here by the window, won't you? We'll have a smoke and I'll find something to drink for you, I dare say."

As the other's face was revealed a little later under the lamplight, Scrant-

ton was interested in the man's pallor. Adair mixed a cocktail and opened a box of cigars. It annoyed Scranton to see him play the host.

The room into which he had followed the Westerner, the chairs opposite the hearth, the burned-down fire, the unmistakable air and effect a room wears which has been used, the lingering suggestion of the scent of violets, the perfume Scranton knew Miss Desprey to like—all made him sure that he had come in upon a tête-à-tête. Adair's face was the only indication he could have of the character and result of what that interview had been.

"You've come directly down from the North, haven't you?" Adair asked.

"Yes."

"Cold, hey?"

"They say they'll have snow for Thanksgiving."

Adair stood with his back to the fire, his hands clasped behind him, as though to warm them at the lifeless ashes.

"Rex," he said to the servant who came here to fetch another lamp, "tell Miss Lucy that Mr. Scranton is here, and tell the men at the stables to put a horse into some rig or other and fetch it around as soon as possible—then come back to me."

Adair smiled at Scranton, the disarming, non-committal smile that charmed and won. It broke over his pale face like sunlight.

"What's your hurry?" Scranton asked. "What's up?"

"Going North," Adair answered briefly.

Scranton nodded, putting together what inferences he had already drawn.

"Look here," he said abruptly, "I've often wondered why you crept off as you did, in the desert? What the deuce was the matter with you?"

"Just like a thief in the night," said the other.

"I didn't care anything about the camel," Scranton answered. "It was just a bit strange, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"It almost seemed," the Kentuckian went on, "as if you didn't want me to know who you were."

"Did it?" Adair smiled at him. He rolled a cigarette from a book in his pocket, and went over to light it from the lamp.

"As though you didn't intend me to wake up the next day and ask your name."

As Adair leaned over to touch the flame with his cigarette, Scranton saw, and it gave him a sharp shock of pain, the scar close to Adair's hair.

"That must have been a damned nasty cut, Adair."

The other man drew himself up quickly, throwing his head back and still smiling down on the man in the chair.

"It was far nastier for the one who cut me; you can bet he never struck any one again, I promise you that!"

How closely he had been living all the afternoon with the things that Scranton burned to know.

To himself he was saying: "You don't suppose, my dear chap, that I'm

so green as to let you run me down here, under the very roof with her. Any lie is good enough to keep me away from you in this house. Why, what a fool you must be!"

"Here's the nigger back," he said, as Rex came into the room. "Go and put my things in my valise, will you, Rex? I've had a telegram over the phone and I'm going North. If you will excuse me, Scranton, I'll go and get ready. I haven't any too much time as it is."

Scranton got up out of his chair, and the two men faced each other.

"He has spoken to her," Scranton decided; "he has asked her to marry him and got his congé. She's refused him; he has the look of tragedy on his face. If I should win Helena, after all!"

If there had been any intention on his part to press Adair now to reveal his identity, the feeling that the woman had refused Adair gave the man a momentary favor.

"I'll look in on you at dinner," said Adair, putting out his hand, "to tell you all good-by, as you Southerners say."

"There's a dining-car on your train," Scranton told him.

"And I've been more than once where there *wasn't!* So-long!"

Adair left the room as a black boy entered with a pile of logs and kindlings, to make a new fire in whose fresh brightness Scranton found great satisfaction. It seemed as if a fresh field had been prepared for him, a clean new place built over the ashes of another man's defeat.

Perhaps he had read things wrongly, who could tell? Perhaps Sydney Adair had been accepted. But no, no; he wouldn't have run off then like a fiend possessed. Perhaps he was running away at sight of Scranton? If this were true, it was a sure proof that Adair was the man he wanted. He must find it out, he must know.

"Robert, back again?" Miss Lucy had come into the room. "How good to see you. Why did you go away?"

Scranton pressed the old lady's hand.

Miss Maccerdene wore a soft dark silk, a little lace over her shoulders, and the light shone on her hair until it gleamed like spun glass.

"I went away on business," Scranton explained. "I had to go."

Miss Lucy shrugged. "Well, if you put money before love! Things *have* been going on in your absence, Robert; my niece and Adair have not spent two hours apart. I haven't ventured to speak to her. She's kept me at a distance for the first time in her life."

Above the spasm of his heart which her words gave him, Scranton said:

"Did you know he was going North to-night? Have you seen him just now?"

Miss Lucy clasped her hands and cried: "Going North? *What* makes you think so?"

"I've been smoking with him for the past quarter of an hour; he let me in at the porch door. He says he's had a wire."

Miss Lucy smiled brightly.

"Thank Heaven! I'm *so glad*, Robert." She put her hand on his arm. "His going away proves a great deal. They've been talking all the afternoon, since luncheon, and if he's running off like this it means she's refused him."

Scranton was relieved at her assurance.

"At all events," she said contentedly, "you've come back, and now I want you to go to your room, and stay not only for dinner, but pass the night here, won't you?"

Adair came in shortly, his coat and stick, hat and gloves in his hand, and Rex behind him, with his valise.

Miss Lucy listened to his explanations, excuses, and his adieus; she could be cordial now the man she dreaded was leaving her roof. There was something almost defiant in his look as he stood there before them both, and something strangely charming to her and very beautiful on that brow and over those eyes where the red mark cut down. She was a real woman and sensible to Adair's fascination.

"Will you bid your niece good-by for

me, Miss Maccerdene? I'm sorry not to see her."

And Miss Maccerdene, too subtle to press the question further, said: "I will make your excuses for you to Helena."

He had taken his departure, and the fashion of his going was arbitrary—his hostess was too polite to offer any suggestion; evidently he wanted to rush away in the night with as little delay as possible and with as much speed.

Scranton and Miss Maccerdene went out with him to the door, to the steps where the buckboard stood, a swinging light under its springs, his luggage tied in the back, and a black man holding the reins.

"Good-by, Scranton," Adair said; "I'll see you again."

"Of course. Good-by."

The other man took his seat in the wagon, and the driver gathered up his reins.

"Tell Miss Desprey to give Mustapha plenty of exercise," Adair said, "and once more bid her good-by."

He held his hat in his hand and went away uncovered. The light wheels of the little wagon rustled through the sandy road, and, looking back, he saw the porch framed in the darkness, for they had gone in, both of them, before he was out of sight, and even the light from the house could not shine upon him, for they had shut the door against the departing guest.

CHAPTER IX.

It was Mary Moody who had driven Helena from Adair. The girl whose charity he had designated as immense had not been able to remain another moment in the atmosphere and presence of Mary Moody. She couldn't breathe in the same room with her, and before she should let the man guess her jealousy, whilst she had strength in her limbs to take her away, she had gone from him.

Overwrought by the strain of attention to his words, balancing judgment, admiration, blame, and love, like the true woman she was, she had at last

succumbed to the most vital of all feelings, jealousy.

With Mary Moody dogging, following close behind her back, Helena made her way to her own rooms and locked herself in. Before her window, whose panes gave on the deepening night, in whose velvet profundity the line of the forest's hem was lost, she drew a chair up and sat down in it, burying her face in the back of it and in her arms.

"I wish I had never seen him," she breathed. "I wish I had died before I ever looked in his face; I wish I had married Roger, I wish I were dead now, I wish he had never told me what he has told me to-day."

The brilliant adventures over which Adair had hastened, marking them simply by a note of indication, the lawless years, even the wronging of Moody, the closing tragedy at Leaping Wolf, were a background to one thing which stood out alone and hideous. The woman—the woman!

Adair's strength, his courage, his patience, his victory over death for them both, would have impressed her under other circumstances. But those very qualities became, as he told, angels that guarded the other woman, and Helena became an unwilling spectator of his tenderness to another. There was nothing uncommon about shooting men in Kentucky; not five miles distant in the mountains there had been a feud, and the hot, quick slaughter had been passed over by the laws of the land. She was used to family dissensions and to the idea of quick revenge. But when the first flood of her jealousy had come and passed, the murderer demanded that she should reckon with it. He had left it for her to unravel, and the very way in which he had put the matter to her made her feel that he had done the whole thing to destroy her love.

"He would never tell a woman whom he loved such things as he told me to-day," she thought; "he wants to make it impossible for me to think of him without despair. Or else"—and the thought was slow to come to her—"he *really* wants me to see him as he is and

to understand that there is another woman in his life."

She stirred here from her despairing position and took her hands from her face, for another thought broke over her.

"Perhaps he only wants to give himself the chance with me. If I am to love him, mustn't I know the truth and love him above it?"

A light broke over her face here and there came a sudden melting of her heart, which had grown so sufferingly cold—it was like the touch of the warmth of spring.

Toward eight o'clock Helena rang for her maid and bade her tell Miss Maccerdene that she would not be down for dinner, that she had a bad headache and wished to dine alone. The negress came eagerly in the door, shut and locked against her for three hours or more.

"Massa Scranton's down-stairs, Miss Helena."

"Tell Miss Lucy what I say, and don't come again."

"Massa Ahdair's done gone Norf, Miss Helena."

Miss Desprey caught the colored girl's arm. Venus was a pretty creature, the foster-sister of her mistress; they had both nursed the same black mammy.

"You're crazy, Venus. Gone North?"

"Yas'm," nodded the girl; "he sho am gone; done took the white awse an' the little buckboard, 'bout six o'clock, Miss Helena. Tom, he done drive ovah de Ridge."

Helena let the girl's arm fall. There was no light in the room, but the hall lamps gave sufficient brightness to show the negress her mistress' face.

"Yoh all mighty sick, Miss Helena. I'se gwine git Miss Lucy," said the girl tenderly.

Helena drew her in and shut the door. For a second she did not speak, staring down into the beautiful, tender face of the octoroon.

"Over the Ridge?" Helena echoed. "It's twelve miles that way—they went at six—why, then they're there now. It's only four miles by the wood road."

"Miss Helena!" gasped the girl. "Yoh nevah—"

"Stay here," her mistress commanded. "I'm not going to let you out of my sight."

CHAPTER X.

The buckboard which carried Adair and his luggage through the November night took him mentally, as he rode, into his past and back into his old self.

"I've ripped up the old track in order to make a new road," he thought. "I've put my history and myself in the hands of a woman. Natural thing to do," he admitted; "more so than one might expect in cold blood at my age. But what do I get for it?"

As they drove on, the road grew heavy and hard to thread with the buckboard's thin wheels. The shock of the last few hours had begun to lessen, and only the fact faced him that, surely as that ten days ago he was riding down through the States to her, he was now riding away. There wasn't any poetry in the truth; he was nothing but an unworthy gentleman; after his history was told he had been turned out of the house.

He saw that he had counted in an enormous fashion on her divine pity and on her certain love. Poor Roger had said she was an outrageous flirt; she was a Puritan, at all events. Well, why should he have expected anything else? Faugh! What execrable taste he had shown! What business had he to tell her the rough, vulgar story? He had told her because he loved her? Men spare the women they love; if they have a grain of common sense they only tell them half the truth. He had told her because he thought she loved him, and he didn't consider himself fit to touch the hem of her dress. Evidently she agreed with him. What cause had he then for complaint?

From the hilltop where they paused a moment, the country stretched away on all sides to the river below and to the blue-grass fields, and through it, if it had been daylight, Adair could

have seen the white house shining among its trees. But there was nothing below them but the impressive darkness—redolent with the smell of pine and resin and the odor of fragrant fires which had burned in the mountains.

"I think we'd better be getting on, Tom," said Adair. "We'll just about make that train."

"Them trains," drawled the negro, "are mostly 'bout three or fo hours late."

"What?"

"Come 'long 'bout three or fo hours late, sah," the boy repeated; "if they gets in 'tall."

"How do you mean—get in at all?"

"Why, Lawd, Massa 'Dair, some goes offen de track 'bout Leffert's Cohners, an' some gits backed up 'gainst de trucks and nevah stops 'tall, I reckon. Dey nevah *does* git any trains heah 'tall, sometimes!"

"The devil!" returned the gentleman.

"Yas, sah," Tom answered; "that's 'bout what ah say, Massa 'Dair!"

They crossed the mountain, making fairly good time. Finally, at the end of a long road, a meager light, the first seen since they had left The Lawns, burst out like a sudden star, and the mid-country station, girt by tracks and backgrounded by the virgin forests, rose at the end of their road.

Tom drew his buckboard to the platform. He threw out Adair's luggage, tied his horse, and put a blanket on him.

"Reckon they ain't nobody heah," he said.

"Then I can't buy my ticket."

"Git it on the train."

"When it comes along."

And Tom giggled: "Yas, sah, when it comes 'long."

Well, Adair was an old traveler, he must take things as they came. He began to pace up and down the platform of the station.

Where should he go and what was he to do? There were several big financial schemes which interested him in the States, but he didn't think it was wise to remain in America. For many

years his interests, even some of his speculations, had been in foreign countries; he had been able to watch them there. There had been already a slight rise in the Nile stock; he would return to Europe and see what he could do with the money he had left.

But he couldn't live alone; no, he couldn't live alone any more. The element in him of tenderness and of real devotion to a woman which had begun with his mother, which his life had developed and stunted as well, he had lost during these past years. Lately it had returned in power. He needed the woman; he cried for her, and, as before, this need declared itself to be to him the only thing worth the next throw of the dice. He had been something like the Oriental bridegroom in the Persian wedding, who uncovered every woman's face in search for his bride.

"There are things in Miss Desprey," he thought as he walked along, "calculated to make me a man and to keep me one. And she hasn't been big enough to undertake the task. No human woman is, I suppose; and certainly no man has a right to expect it. We are egotistical enough to think we have a right to lift ourselves up by a woman's goodness, and we are wrong," he said decidedly. "We are wrong."

Over and over again he tried to repeat to himself that he had come down to Kentucky in order to do just this, to set her free from her fancy for him, and that he had succeeded, and now that the effect was accomplished he was forced to acknowledge that he took no satisfaction in it whatever.

Adair paused in his walk, his face set in the direction whence the train should come.

"I can't fight it out alone," he said.

They had already waited an hour. Adair went around to the negro boy.

He sent Tom home much against the latter's will, and when he had seen the last light of the lantern's reflection swallowed up by the night, he remained staring down the darkness toward Marysville, while out of the thick forest to the left came the small trail cutting

through the heart of the woods, from the railroad to The Lawns, shortening the distance to the junction by about six miles.

Adair's eyes, piercing the dark for an engine-light, gave it up, and he went into the little stuffy room and sat down under the kerosene-lamp on the board seat that ran around the wall, and gave himself up to painful reverie.

When she touched foot to the station platform, the girl paused for the first time. Just there, with the fact that the train would probably come before she could have a chance to speak to Adair and that he would be gone in the next quarter of an hour—just there she paused. Nothing had been strong enough to keep her from riding through the bit of forest, from hurrying after him; but now that she was within a few feet of him, she wavered.

What had she come here for? To whom had she come?

Hadn't Adair taken his own ways and means to set her free from himself—to set himself free? Didn't he want to be free? Heavens! What had come to her that she should run after a man and pursue him?

A slender figure in her riding-habit, turning her whip between her hands, Helena looked backward toward the woodland path which would soon be too dark for her to take safely alone. Then she looked at the station with its single light shining through the window.

She approached and looked in, and there she saw him—the desperado, the man on whose head his own story had piled crimes; there she saw the wicked Sydney Adair. He was bent over, his head in his hands, and he sat alone, deserted by his friends and his enemies; alone with his thoughts, whatever they might chance to be, and his attitude was the picture of desolation. He suggested a shipwrecked man on an island as he sat there in the lonely mid-country, a prey to his despair.

And the girl peering in at the window felt her heart leap to him. It was at this moment that the pity, that

the mercy and the charity with which Sydney Adair in his own mind had so often credited her, rushed now to him; and it was strong enough to drown every other beautiful feeling in her heart. After all, possibly pity wasn't the name for her feeling.

For just one second more Helena held herself back from him, perfectly aware that when she should go in to him now, she would go in to him forever; nothing would ever be the same after this step. More completely knowing what the whole thing meant than she would have believed a woman under the sway of emotion could do, she walked, firmly now, toward the door, and opened it. He heard her, and the sound raised him from his reverie.

Adair started up, staring at her in amazement; she was the last person on God's earth that he had looked to see, the only person that he wanted to see. Without thinking how impossible it could be that she had followed him, he thought only: "Thank heaven, she's come!"

She was in a riding-habit, a small, dark tricorn hat on her head. With delight ringing in his voice, he said to her:

"You; in the name of all good angels, you!"

Helena had been battling with herself, fighting jealousy and condemnation, and at the end letting in nothing but love. But it had all been done with herself alone, with no one to disturb her current of reflection—now a visible man was before her, grave and pale, and the face was a reality, and she couldn't meet it as though it were something in her thoughts alone. There was a real man here; a strong, vigorous man, and she didn't quite know how she felt toward him.

"Yes," she said, "I came over because I couldn't bear to have you go away like this. I wanted to know why you should leave our house as you have done."

"When did you know?"

"Venus told me at dinner-time. I don't believe you had reached here when I started to follow. I'm sorry,"

she said more gravely, "that we have been so inhospitable. I mean that you should feel you had to go away like some one—" And here she stopped.

Adair finished for her. "Go on, you mean to say like some one in disgrace. Well, I rather felt myself disgraced, or that you did not want to see me any more."

Scarcely understanding, she said to herself:

"He's quite unmoved at seeing me, he meant exactly what he said, he meant to set me free, he thinks—he thinks I care for him and he doesn't care for me. What have I done in coming like this?"

The scarlet rushed up into her face, but her pride gave her the poise that she needed.

Adair went on to say: "I know how much I asked of you this afternoon when I told you all I did. You were good beyond words to listen, and you have put the last touch to your kindness in coming here like this."

She tried to answer him in the same spirit in which he spoke, and said bravely:

"I wanted to assure you that if you still cared for my friendship—"

"Cared for it!" he exclaimed warmly. "Why, you're the soul of charity—"

"No," she interrupted, "I should not have run away so rudely if I had been the soul of charity. What did you think?"

"I only thought," he said, less guardedly, "that you never wanted to look in my miserable face again."

"Don't, don't!" she murmured, looking in his miserable face too long.

"You should not have taken that long ride alone. I am very grateful, but how are you going to get back?"

"Oh, there are a dozen ways. There's the road and the path. The agent will send me back when he comes."

"The agent!" Adair exclaimed. "He must on no account find you here at this hour."

She smiled slightly. "Oh, Mr.

Stacey's an old friend of mine, and he's used to the pranks of Southern girls."

"Come," said Adair, "I want you, nevertheless, not to be here when he turns up."

He opened the door into the fresh, fragrant air, still and soundless. He looked out into the silent distance, where there was a potent spell in nature that called to him. The velvet border of the forest came darkly down and spoke of its overwhelming shadows, its deep rooms, and its leafy beds.

Still she hesitated before passing out of the open door.

"What will you do between now and your train, and why doesn't it come?"

"I shall think over my sins," Adair said, laughing, "and pray that you will get safely home. Something or other is sure to come along before morning, and I don't mind waiting."

She passed reluctantly out, and the outdoors seemed profound and deep; for a second she felt deserted in it, and then she felt wonderfully alone with him.

She had ridden over on an old white horse, safe and sure of foot, and in order to light her path she had fetched a lantern, which she held in the circle of her arm. The white horse stood by the post where she had tied it, and the lantern by its side.

Adair lifted her into the saddle. They sought each other timidly in the flicker of the light. He adjusted her stirrup, helped her arrange her lantern, then lifted his hat and stood with head uncovered. She realized with a sudden tightening of her heart-strings that it was a final good-by to him. In just this second she understood that so far as he was concerned there was only one reason why she should go like this, and that reason was the existence of another woman.

Leaning toward him impulsively, she asked:

"Was everything you told me true?"

"Do you think I would play on your good faith?"

"Oh," she exclaimed, rather desperately, "how could I know what your

reasons were in any degree? Why did you tell me what you did?"

"Just because I couldn't play on your good faith any longer."

"When other men seem to want to stand well, you try to stand badly in my eyes."

Still not giving her the least evidence of how he felt, he said, smiling:

"No, I just want to stand as I am."

"Does Roger know all you told me?"

Adair made a gesture. "Goodness, no! I'm entirely in your hands."

She put one out impulsively toward him, and he said:

"Oh, yes, I know how perfectly safe I am in them."

She took up her reins, she embraced her lantern, and in its valiant light she tried herself to be cool and brave, and to go away without letting him see the depth of her unhappiness, but she could not quite make it out.

"I have listened," she said, "to all you had to say, and I think you might let me ask you something now."

The woman who had driven Adair from her, who had kept company with her in her own room, who had followed her through the forest like a sorceress, now seemed to stand between the man and herself.

"Are you going to see the woman you told me about again?"

And Adair answered gladly and rapidly:

"Oh, yes, if I can. That's one reason why I'm going away now."

His answer stiffened every nerve in her body; she felt disgraced, ashamed; she loved him, he knew it, and he had been obliged to employ every means to free himself. Were there any forests dark enough to hide her now!

"Good-by!" she said vehemently. "Good-by!" And she turned her horse and rode away into the shadow.

For a second Adair remained as she had left him, then a wonderful expression crossed his face; it was lighted with humor and tenderness.

"Why, she's jealous," he said half aloud; "she's jealous! That's what the matter was!"

He slipped off the platform and followed the white horse and the daring lady into the forest.

CHAPTER XI.

A fine, small trail cut through the woods, and, as Adair entered, the fragrance of the forest poured its balm over him; a whippoorwill called sharply through the dark. He would not strike a match to light a cigar lest she might hear, and he kept the flicker of her lantern just before him as he stole behind her like a thief. It was a new proposition for him to be alone in the heart of the night with a woman, and to be her protector. Every other woman faded away from his thoughts, and he followed this single star like a pilgrim, believing that it might never shine on him.

"Bill Flanders," he said to himself, "don't talk about the faith that moves mountains being out of commission, for you're the biggest miracle on record."

The girl on the white horse went slowly; at every remembrance of her kindness his gratitude leaped toward her. He intended to follow her until he knew she was quite safe, and then he would go back and wait for the morning train. But Helena disconcerted him by fetching her horse to a sudden standstill, as some intelligence more keen than the material senses told her she was not alone. He could tell that she sat listening, and then she cried out:

"Who's there?"

He could not give her another moment's anxiety, and, calling out to her, came up to her side. With a new tone in his voice, he said:

"Why, you didn't think I would let you ride back alone, did you?"

He stood by her bridle-rein in the lantern's uncertain light.

"You've been crying!" he said sharply. "Don't! Don't!"

He should warn her against himself, and he hadn't a word to do so within his power; it would be better if he should leave her to the forest's mercy,

but he could not stir from her side. He said softly:

"You *cried* for me—you *cried* for my sake!"

He bit his lips, threw his head back, a gesture of despair almost, and certainly of defiance, in his action; then he put his arms around her as she sat her horse.

"Little girl!" he murmured, with the intensest tenderness. "Little girl!"

The lantern she held in her arms was between them. He took it from her and put it down on the ground. Then he slipped her foot out of the stirrup and lifted her to the earth. They faced each other in the trail, and low along the piny path the lantern cast its slender light, and each could see only the outline of the other's face.

It was she who suddenly put both her hands on his shoulders.

"I don't care what you've done. If you think I'm too good to be loved and to be happy, I'd rather die."

His very breathing shook him; she felt his body quiver under her hands. He held her as though she were his very own, and when he set her free, she was conscious that her soul and mind and life were his, as much so as though they had been mated in some other world. The first words she said to him when she was free were:

"You won't go back now; you'll go with me to The Lawns?"

Adair, as though in order to answer her he were obliged to disenchant himself, passed his hand quickly over his forehead, over the old scar, then took her hand, and said:

"There's more reason for me to go now than ever. I shall see you safely through the wood, then go for my train. I have a few more things to clear up before I can face Kentucky, and I want to wipe out an old score. I mean to say," he went on, speaking rapidly, "there's just one thing now that keeps me from asking your aunt for you; it's that murder I told you about in Alaska. I want to bring the proofs that I never killed that man. When I can fetch those and settle my score, then I shall come back to you."

In his swift speech, in his determination, she understood that there was no will of hers that could bid against his. She saw what kind of a man she was matched against, and that she was now under his mastery. She accepted what he said. As long as he would let her love him, she could bear it all.

"And when the score is cleared," she repeated; "when it's cleared you will come back?"

He said slowly: "You know what kind of a man I am. Such as I am, I am yours. You know what my passions are and how I love you. From the first moment I saw you, there has been nothing else but you. If I leave you to-night and never see you again, there'll be nothing else but you to the end. When I clear that score I'll come back."

He saw that she could not answer him; he heard her drawn breath with something like a cry in it, and he caught her to his breast.

"Helena," he murmured, "think before it's too late."

She said his name for the first time. "Sydney, Sydney, it's too late now."

But he knew that she was not yet his, so much of the dross and tarnish had hurt him. Could he still save her?

He held his heart back for just one moment more. There was a warfare in the dark; the last impulse to shield her from himself. But she drew him, he heard her call to him, and then he bent down and kissed her. He had sworn to kiss her before he died. Now he did so a hundred times, and no bolt from heaven struck him as he held her in the silent wood.

A wind began to rise, and blew fresh and cold. It brought the scent of balsam and of pine, and laid a fragrant mantle about them, as unconscious of anything in the world but each other, they stood in the needle-strewn path.

CHAPTER XII.

Helena's ecstasy lasted from the hill-top to the path where Venus took the mare by the bridle to lead her to the

stable. Then she began to realize what a mad thing she had done.

As she came up to the house, she saw that one of the men-servants stood in the doorway, and the lighted windows welcomed and reproached her.

"Oh, Miss Helena," the old negro cried, "whar you done bin? Miss Lucy, she's powerful sick."

"Let me come in, Rex."

"Oh, yas'm, Miss Helena. What you done scar' Miss Lucy so foh? We done hunt ev'rywhar foh yoh all. The boys am all round the kentry."

"Where's Miss Lucy?"

Miss Maccerdene's own maid, Pheebe, coming hurriedly down the stairs at the sound of the young missress' voice, and met Helena.

"Don' yoh all fret, honey, Miss Lucy ain' so bayde now. She done keeled right ovah when we bust in yoh doah and yoh wasn't thah. She moh quiet now."

Miss Desprey had pushed on to the door of the room in the front of the house where Miss Maccerdene passed her days, and she saw the lamp by the old lady's bed lighted and the spinster seated among her pillows, over her night-dress a pale silken shawl. Miss Maccerdene's eyes were intently on the door, and her niece ran impetuously to the bedside and flung herself down, seizing between her own the old lady's slender hands.

"Darling, forgive me! I'm so sorry! I didn't *dream* you would worry. I didn't think you would miss me until I was home again. You know I often get restless and go out. Are you very ill? Have you been terribly frightened? Tell me, tell me now."

With tears in her eyes, the old lady looked tenderly at her beautiful niece.

"I'm better, Nellie. I fainted for the first time in a long life, and it was too much for seventy years. Robert carried me up-stairs and Pheebe put me to bed. That's all; there is nothing serious about it. I don't need the doctor Robert rushed away to get. They must telephone that you have come home."

"I was all right—all right, aunty. You *shouldn't* worry so."

"You've always had your own way, Helena, but you've never—never—"

The girl tried to soothe. "Why, I've often been out at night before! Last week—until midnight."

"Yes, with Roger and Robert—but alone—never alone."

"I had Venus."

"Ah, if we were back in slave-days, I'd have that girl whipped," the old lady said calmly.

"And what would you do with *me*?"

There was a fire in the younger woman's eyes; and while her aunt regarded her the eyelids, like cautious shades, covered the flame. The hot blood rose along the beautiful face, then with something like defiance, as though she dared to have her secret read, she lifted her eyelids and proudly returned the old lady's glance.

"Where have you been, Helena? Will you tell me?"

"I went to ride on the wood road."

"Why?"

She did not answer.

"Mr. Adair went away to-night by the longer cut. Did you know he was going?"

"I didn't know he was going, Aunt Lucy, until Venus came and told me."

Miss Maccerdene watched her niece.

"Helena."

"Yes."

The aunt was neither sentimental nor selfish, the occasion to her was grave and terrible; she distrusted the man who had recently been there.

"I don't know when women need each other," she said hesitatingly; "mothers and daughters seem to be positive enemies sometimes; and, as for sisters, they are always quarreling. Women friends have their jealousies, but between you and me there is rather an unusual relation. I'm an old woman. I've known you twenty-six years. But don't think of me as anything but an old lady who loves you, not as your aunt with a claim on your confidence. Speak to me if you ever want to, and not a minute before. When that door was broken in to-night, I knew that

you had gone to meet Mr. Adair. Rex forced the door. It was done before they told me. I should never have allowed such a thing; certainly not before Robert Scranton, but it was too late. I was fool enough to faint, but not because I thought you had gone to a clandestine meeting, but because I expected never to see you again!"

"Aunt Lucy!"

"Yes"—the old lady smiled faintly—"I thought you had gone with him forever."

Her niece exclaimed and caught Miss Lucy's hand.

"In my day," Miss Maccerdene continued, with humor, "elopements were radical. The ladies who rode off at midnight did not come back before morning. And I was prepared to learn that you had done as other Kentucky girls have done before you. But you have come back, thank God!"

Her tact and her wisdom—above all, the fact that she lay suffering from her emotion—touched the younger woman above selfish delight and passion.

"Aunt Lucy," after a second she said, with some defiance, "you hate him so!"

The old lady drew a long breath. "I do not know him, Helena; you do not know him."

"Aunty, I know him better than any one knows him. I know him with all my heart, my mind, and my faith!"

"Ah," Miss Maccerdene thought, with a pang of agony, "*this* is the real thing! The terrible, great, true thing! Robert Scranton, you may as well ride home and stay there."

"When you know him, Aunt Lucy, as I do—"

The other patiently smiled. "That I can never hope to do, child. When is he coming back?"

"I don't know," cried her niece. "Oh, I hope soon." She raised her face with more confidence, all eagerness now to speak of the man she had met in secret.

"He had spent the afternoon telling me of his cruel life, of its bitterness and its victories, and at the end I rushed from the room without a word of comfort to him. I was critical, jealous, and angry at what he told me, and I turned

away from him as though he were an outcast. That's why he went away. I couldn't let him go like that, could I, Aunt Lucy? Could I have let him go so?"

Seeing her emotion, the other woman said gently: "I reckon not, dear."

"So I followed him. You said you thought I had gone with him forever. I was ready. I begged to go. I would never leave him of my own accord, but he wouldn't take me; he said it wasn't the way he wanted to win me, and he sent me back to you."

"I'm glad, Helena. I thank him."

Tears and emotion were gaining their way with the girl. She wanted to plead for this man with her aunt, whom she knew Miss Maccerdene disliked and judged. But she couldn't think of any plea to make; she feared there was nothing in Adair's life that would gain approval. At length, lifting her beautiful face, over which the tears now freely fell, she whispered: "I love him so, Aunt Lucy. I love him so."

And Miss Maccerdene, being a woman, and even at seventy loving love and capable of being touched by its vision, smiled through her own tears, nodded, opened her arms, and her niece went to them.

CHAPTER XIII.

Helena was unable to speak to her aunt of her lover. His letters and his telegrams were all she lived for. He was in Colorado and California, passing quickly through. He told of nothing that he saw or did; he wrote her only protestations that lifted her beyond care or even fear. He was clearing up old scores, making clean pages; and even Mary Moody didn't frighten her any more. She had written Adair everything, and he had telegraphed her not to worry.

Even then she would have been tempted to start out toward him had not word reached her that he himself was coming back to her. Now he would meet Roger here, for Miss Maccerdene had sent for her nephew; but that did not seem to be an unfortunate

thing, for Roger adored him, and Helena decided that her cousin's love for her had been nothing but a passing attachment. Still, she asked herself unceasingly: "What would Roger think if he knew Adair's real life? What position would the honorable Englishman take if he knew as much as she did?"

There was no one these days whom Helena wanted less to see than Scranton. She had kept him away by excuses. Miss Maccerdene's health was telephoned to him every day, his kind offers of aid refused. But finally, yielding to her aunt's wish that he should be allowed to come, Helena went down one afternoon to find him standing before the book-shelves, aimlessly reading the titles through his eye-glasses.

"Aunt Lucy is a great deal better. She sends you all kinds of messages, and it won't be long before she'll be able to come down and make you your egg-noggs."

These past few days had affected Scranton like a serious illness. He had ridden like a Mad Anthony over the country, coming close to The Lawns over and over again, not liking to force his entrance; living for telephone messages, living on the edge of his nerves and patience, miserable, brooding, and at last despairing.

"The flowers you've sent aunty have been so beautiful," Miss Desprey said. "She has enjoyed them so much—you're awfully kind."

She did not dare to say how ill he looked or to ask him why, for she had an overwhelming self-accusation, and she knew she was the cause of his unhappiness.

Scranton mutely took the hand given him, and held it so firmly that the girl winced.

"Please!" She tried to draw it away.

Patient waiting, subterfuge, and control were now all over for Scranton. And as his companion saw that the barriers were down she trembled, guilty, secure in another man's love, happy in her own fate and miserable, all at once. She turned from her visitor, troubled, and tried to offer him a chair, and by

a commonplace remark to break the spell. Scranton found his voice, and, angry at the shake in it and the roughness, he said:

"No, I don't want to sit down. I want you to listen to me now. You haven't wanted to see me; you haven't let me come. Why, what has happened?"

"You promised, Robert," she began. "I thought we *quite* understood that you promised."

He laughed sharply. "Oh, a man's promises to a woman he's trying to win can't be looked upon as serious vows. When the time comes for him to speak, he's got to speak. I've lived in hell these few days; I can't go on like this. The night I saw your door broken in and your room empty I realized what you meant to me, and the days between then and now—" He put his hand to his forehead helplessly, and stammered: "I can't tell you about them. I'm always at my worst with you; at my worst."

Then, with an infinitely touching gesture, not without grace and charm, Scranton, smiling faintly, put out both his hands to her.

"Be merciful, be merciful!"

She could have wept. She was human, a tender woman, all warmth and tenderness, impulse and fire, and the idea that she must hurt him more brutally than ever made her foolishly kind. She put both her own hands in his. She trusted him thus far.

"I wish you had never seen me," she murmured. "I don't know what to say. I don't know why you like me so. You're a good friend; it makes me sad to lose you. I can't bear to hurt you, but I must, it seems. Do let me go; do hate me, for I have made you suffer, and I couldn't help it."

Scranton held her hands firmly.

"Oh, I can't believe it's true," he said intensely. "I didn't know a heart could ache like this. I'd rather wait for a hundred years on a slender hope. Won't you give it to me?"

She shook her head.

"Then what can I do?" she cried desperately.

"Love me!"

His determination frightened her.

"I can never do that, Robert," she said more firmly; "never! Let me go."

"Who is between us? I know there is some one, otherwise I would have won you."

Then, before she could deny or confess: "It's Adair," he said, in an ecstasy of excitement. "I knew it without believing it. I was sure of it when I said it was impossible. It's Adair. You're engaged to him."

"I am engaged to him," she confessed. "It's a secret, and you've hunted me into telling it."

She stood pinioned by him, for he still prisoned her hands.

"You're unfair to urge me so; it's unfair. I'm sorry if I've made you unhappy." She could hardly say: "It's not my fault."

"You threw Captain Maccerdene over for him," Scranton went on brutally; "you played with me. You let me help you out. Heartless, cruel!"

He didn't know what he said, for he was beside himself. He caught her to him with a cry, covered her face with kisses, held her to him. Then, almost as passionately as he had drawn her to him, he set her free, so that she caught the table to steady herself as he put her out of his arms.

"Why didn't I kill him in the forest, why didn't I kill him in the desert? My God!"

Fascinated by his fire, by his brutality, tingling with his embraces and feeling herself polluted by his caresses, it took her some seconds to recover anything like self-possession. But it was his menace to Adair that calmed her. She went straight up to Scranton and laid one of her hands on the arm that had held her to him. Her face was pale and stern.

"I can perhaps some day forgive you because you tell me that I led you on. You seem to love me very terribly; you frighten me terribly, at any rate—but something of what you say is true. I think I was to blame, and I'm sorry. But when you speak of killing the man

I love, every feeling dies in me but loathing of you. Unless you want me to hate you with all my might and main, take back what you have said and go away and leave me now."

Scranton stood white as death. With a great deal of solemnity, he lifted up his right hand, as though he took a mental vow.

"Hush, don't tell me about any man

you love. If you value his life, help me to forget his existence and yours."

He took up his hat and his crop from the table. He held the crop uplifted like a weapon; he did not look at Helena, but toward the door through which, in a second more, he went.

"I wish I had killed him long ago! When you write your lover, tell him to keep out of my way!"

PART FIVE.

CHAPTER I.

Adair had gone to Colorado. It hadn't taken him long to discover the whereabouts of the woman who had gone with him over the frozen trail. His appearance in Cripple Creek was no more remarkable than that of any other well-to-do prospector.

In pursuance of the information he had gained, he called out to a big, slouchy man, who, with a huge stack of parcels under his arm, came out of a provision-store.

"Hello, partner, can you tell me where Berkeley Foster hangs out?"

The man spat frankly, shifted his parcels, and looked Adair over.

"Buyin' out Cripple Creek?" he asked.

"Not a great deal," Adair responded. "Stranger?"

"Yes, an Englishman, just over."

"Well," said the man slowly, "you mean Foster, the superintendent of the Virginia Mine?"

"Yes."

"He's away just now to Denver. He lives over that"—he pointed—"bout a mile on; gray-shingled house, sign on the door. Might as well walk along with you if you think it's worth while to go over."

He was curious and suspicious. Adair saw that he was a Yankee, and accepted his companionship heartily.

"All right, my friend," he said; "show me the trail if you happen to be free and haven't got an engagement at the town hall."

The man didn't laugh; he settled his bundle again, took a fresh bite of to-

bacco, and, without further preamble, led the way to the settlement at the edge of the cabin, where Superintendent Foster had his sign on the door.

On the porch of the frame house, as the two men came up, a tall, handsome woman stood. She had one child in her arms, and another, a few years older, rode a tiny velocipede up and down on the boards of the piazza. Evidently the man guiding him knew her well.

"Man here wants to see Berk, Mrs. Foster. Out of town, ain't he?"

"Yes," said the woman, looking at the traveler, who asked for her husband.

The stranger bared his thick, fair hair.

"Sorry your husband is away. I've come out to leave a little ore with him. As I want to go along to Colorado Springs this afternoon, perhaps you'll let me come indoors and write Mr. Foster a line."

The woman cleared her throat. "Come in," she said. "You can go long," she ordered the man in the slouch-hat. "That's all right, Pete. You might bring over Mr. Foster's letters from the office down at the shaft."

Then: "Billy," she said sharply to the child on the velocipede, "you stop that scraping on the boards; go ride out in the grass. Come on in, please." And with the child on her arm, she turned and led the way, her visitor following, and shut the door after them.

He had been taken into a room which served evidently as office and general sitting-room. There were the superintendent's desk, with its books and pa-

pers, a few rocking-chairs, and a horse-hair sofa, on which the woman sank down. She put the child on the floor, and it crawled away on all fours. The woman put both her hands on her knees and sat staring at her guest, then she spoke. The color rushed into her face and flushed it; rushed in and flushed it again, like waves across a satiny shore, for her skin was clear and cool.

"I'd have known you anywhere, Bill Flanders, but you've shaved your beard and you're awfully changed. But I'd have known you anywhere, in the light or in the dark. Now, what have you come here for? How did you find me? I thought I'd fall when you walked up just now."

The unexpected transformation in the appearance of the woman he had believed dead or insane, or in possibly worse condition; the dignity of motherhood, her crawling child at her feet, her honorable position in the town had been too much for Adair to take in.

"Of course you'd have known me," he nodded. "I'd have known you, too; though as far as change goes, I guess you've got the best of it. I wanted to find out what had become of you, and it took me a long time, didn't it?"

"You bet it did!" she exclaimed vehemently. "And for all you've moved hand or foot, I'd have been—"

Her visitor nodded impatiently. "Anyway, you're not, let it go at that. I didn't leave you in the right way, Mary, and I couldn't go any farther until I found out what had become of you. I promise you I didn't expect it would be as good as this. I see you're on Easy Street, all right. Is the man married to you? Is he good to you?"

Mrs. Foster looked through the window at the crude, brilliant day. She could see the little boy passing on his tiny wheel, his legs going round like a spider's in the web, his polo-cap on the back of his hair.

"Well," she said slowly, "he calls it marriage, I call it marriage, but I guess if we'd gone through very much of a church ceremony the State would call it bigamy, don't you? Everybody here thinks we are honorably man and wife."

Here Adair interrupted her, glad from his heart he could bring her this news.

"You can be that, all right, to-morrow," he said quickly. "Moody's dead."

She gave an exclamation, although she did not even change her position.

"Is that true? I'm glad of that. Poor Tom," she said, with an instant clouding of her eyes; "poor old Tom! How did you know? He didn't get you, anyway, did he?"

In a few words Adair told her the story, to which she listened with the keenest interest. When he had finished, she said: "Well, I'll tell Berk; he'll be glad enough. He's the sort of man that all kinds of law and order make a difference to, and he'll be awfully glad for the children's sake."

After a second, as Adair did not speak, she turned upon him passionately.

"If it wasn't for what you've just told me, I'd be mad at you for having come here, Bill Flanders; but as long as you've brought me the news that makes me all right toward Berk, I've got to bear it."

Her tone was so violent that Adair instinctively rose from his chair.

"I'll go right away now, then," he said. "I could have written you this, of course, but I wanted to find out for myself what you were doing and how you were, and that's the truth."

"Well, you let me go along long enough without bothering, it seems now almost as though you wanted to hunt me down."

He exclaimed: "I guess you don't mean those words, do you? I wanted to see if I couldn't do something for you. There've been times when I couldn't sleep for thinking about you." As Adair spoke, he knew that he was not quite honest.

The child had crept up to him, and now pulled itself up by Adair's leg. It stood high as his knee; it had a thick thatch of colorless hair and limpid eyes. Its mother caught it up in her arms.

"Well," she said, "you see where I've gotten to; nobody knows anything about me except just what you see. And I've got these kids. I was sick for two years after you left me in the convent, and afterward I worked like a nigger to make my bread. *I worked*," she said defiantly, "and I wasn't any fool, as you know. I could have taught anything, pretty nearly, but I didn't dare go into decent families. When I was selling in a Chicago store, Foster came in one day to buy some soap and perfumery at my counter, and we got to know one another, and that's how it came about. He's on the rise."

Adair could see that she was frightened at his coming.

"You can pull us all down, Bill Flanders." Then, as she saw his expression, her voice changed, and she pointed out through the window to the little figure on the rattling wheel. "That's my first boy out there. I call him Bill."

Adair had not reseated himself; he stood before her holding his hat and stick. Just one thing spoke out to him from the circumstances he had learned; as far as he was concerned, whatever the burden might be, he was to bear its consequences to the end.

"After I got well again," the woman went on, "do you know, I found out that I was a different woman?"

She stretched her head out toward him, her chin sharp and her eyes strange.

"Those five weeks, those dreadful five weeks! Well, I guess they fitted me into a new shape. At any rate, I sickened on everything I'd ever known, and I never think about it any more."

She lifted her child up to her face, and for a second concealed herself behind the little form.

"I wish you hadn't come," she said suddenly. "I'd rather not have heard about Moody than to have seen you again. Hush," she said to the child, who began to whimper, "hush! Papa won't bring you home anything if you don't keep still. You wouldn't squeal on me, would you, Bill?" she asked, and blushed furiously. She looked up at

him appealingly out of her brilliant eyes. "Foster would kill me if he knew anything but what I've told him."

Adair did not ask her what she had told. He said reassuringly, smiling at her with as much friendly kindness as he knew how to put into his eyes: "Well, now, you don't think it's very likely, do you, Mary, that, after going with you over the Pass as I did, I'd have anything to say you wouldn't want to hear?"

She looked at him, fascinated, for a moment, then with a shiver she said: "Oh, I don't know; you were hard enough then, you turned me down hard enough, you blamed me worse than any judge could have done. I don't know why you've come. You see, you may have reasons that you don't tell me. Perhaps there's some one you want me to clear you to."

Her hearer, without betraying how true she had struck home, said: "That's all right, Mary, that's all right. Don't you worry about what I'll ever do to you."

Then, more reasonably, she returned: "Oh, I know how white you are. I think you're the whitest man I ever saw."

Adair exclaimed: "Oh, Mary, if that's true, I'm sorry for you."

With every second he renounced more fully the hope that she might set him free.

She sat patting rhythmically her cheek with one of the baby's hands, and repeated slowly: "The whitest man and the bravest man. And there was a time when you used to spoil me. At any rate, you made all the other men look like fifteen cents, and I would never have thought of Foster if I hadn't set out to keep decent. There wasn't any use waiting round for you, Bill Flanders. I knew that. I knew how you hated the sight of me, and I wish you'd stayed away now. I do," she nodded. "I do!"

"I'm going now," Adair said, "at any rate."

Without protestation she got up, settling the child on her arm, and followed him toward the door.

"You look as though you were getting along well," she said. "You seem to be on velvet. Aren't you afraid that you might run into some of the boys here?"

"I took the chance," Adair said, "to see you, Mary, and I shall be out of Cripple Creek in twenty-four hours."

She said tentatively, as though she wished and did not wish to hear: "Doing well?"

And before he could answer, the older child, dragging his velocipede behind him, came into the room.

"Mama," he said, in his high-keyed voice, "is that man going to be here for dinner?"

Adair glanced at the trio, the mother and her baby and the oldest son. The words that had crossed his mind in the Bay of Salerno came back to him. "Be ye removed and cast into the midst of the sea." Talk of miracles! Out of what grain of goodness or faith in this woman had this miracle been wrought? A home, a life, a decent existence out of what he knew. He bent down and patted the little boy's yellow head.

"Are you good to them, Mary?"

"My Lord, Bill!"

"Are you good to him?"

"Berk doesn't seem to have any fault to find."

He ventured to take in his own the baby's little wandering hand. "Looks to be all right, I guess."

"Mama," repeated the little boy, "is that man going to stay for dinner? Let's have pickles."

The woman, looking into Adair's eyes, said: "I hope he'll grow up just like you."

She let her mask slip; the hard, impenetrable expression she had worn changed, and the real passion of her intense nature looked at him from over her infant's head, at the man who had been her wickedness, her temptation—who had led her to crime, then shielded her from it, and brought her out through the Trail.

"You're a great big man, Bill Flanders," she said, nodding at him; "and if I don't ask to hear about you, it isn't because I don't care to hear.

It all comes back, comes back!" She spoke chokingly, holding her child fast. "You think I've got nerve, don't you, to marry any decent man and never tell him? Perhaps I had my reasons; perhaps I thought when I found out that I wanted a decent man to help me pull through that I wanted to make up for what I've done."

Adair said soothingly: "Come, Mary, I understand it all, and I tell you it's all right."

"Bill," said Mary Foster to the boy who had begun again, "you go out and get the girl to give you some pickles. You see"—she turned to Adair when the child had gone—"you could do with me whatever you liked from the first, and I want to tell you that I don't believe I was ever as bad as it looked; because I did what I did up there, Bill Flanders, out of an awful kind of love, and on the march through with you, I saw it as it was, and I came out like new."

"Don't you believe," Adair said soothingly, "that there is anybody to blame you or bring up your past to you. And don't you worry; you've got two fine little kids, be good to them."

"Don't you be afraid of that," she retorted warmly. "I work and I keep along, and perhaps in some way I may make up. Still, I've got an awful fear, Bill, that punishment will strike me somewhere."

"No, no," Flanders returned, "we worked that all out those five weeks. I'm witness to that."

As if by inspiration, she said suddenly: "Is there any way I could do anything for you, Bill?"

"No." Then he added: "Just be happy."

Mary Foster laughed harshly. "Are you happy?"

"I guess I am," he responded, with fervor.

She gave him a searching glance, started to ask him a question, then for the second time buried her face beside her child, and so holding it put out one hand to him.

"Better go along now."

Adair bade her good-by and started

out at once through the doorway, when she called after him. Billy, the little boy, came tearing back with a large green cucumber pickle in his hand, his little face a grin of delight.

"Wipe your hands and shake with the gentleman."

Adair tried to kill a dreadful doubt that came to his mind as he looked down on the blond boy, but he asked nothing.

There was still on Mrs. Foster's face the look of mute appeal which Adair would not let touch him as he bade her good-by again. She didn't take his hand; she now kept both hands around the child, which she held close to her face. But just as she realized that he was in another moment going down the little path to the road, and that she shouldn't see him again, the woman in her spoke out: "I hope she's good enough for you, Bill."

Even above his surprise Adair thought to himself: "Well, that's a new way of putting it."

"Don't tell me not to speak of her," Mrs. Foster exclaimed, "because I'm too low. I just couldn't stand it if you said that to me."

Adair didn't reply; he only lifted his hat off to her as he might have done to a great lady, and smiled, and she saw him go down the walk and start away toward the town. She watched him until his figure had disappeared, then she was conscious of her crying baby and the little boy's treble at her side.

"Mama, what's the man's name? Why ain't he coming back? Mama, why didn't you let him eat dinner here?"

The mother turned and took them in.

"Here," she said to the only servant who appeared with the wash in her arms, "you take the kids into dinner. I'm going over to the shaft."

CHAPTER II.

Helena stood on the edge of the winter forest and looked into the fair world it was; hoary, fragrant, it shone in the sunlight like a bridal-veil. The dark,

slippery path wound through it like an enchanted band. She loved the path that had led for her into life. Over it Sydney would come now again, and this time she did not think it was in her to let him go away alone. She went back to the house with reluctance, for she had been obliged to concede everything to her aunt, and the place had become intolerable to her, filled, as she felt it was, with dislike and criticism of the man she loved.

Roger and Lord Cecil Manners had returned from the West, and Roger had been a great shock to her. The Western life, instead of making him more fit and strong, had seemed fatal to his health and habits. He drank a great deal, and, as drink had always been something he could not stand, his appearance and condition were a cause of great anxiety and grief to his relatives.

Helena would have been glad not to return to the house until Adair himself took her away from it, if such a thing were possible.

Now, as she came in, she laid her furs aside, and still in her hat and jacket went into the drawing-room, thinking to be alone there and to play; but she waited before her harp hopelessly, for she had no spirit in her to sing, and she turned slowly to find a seat in the window where a few weeks earlier Sydney Adair had sat listening to her music. The curtains hid her; and curled up in her corner, her beautiful face pale and sad, she looked out at the gray afternoon, which was slipping into the twilight in this quarter of an hour before the lights were brought in. She was thinking so deeply, in such a troubled strain, that she paid no attention to the fact that Scranton and Manners came into the room, and sat down opposite each other before the firelight, to smoke and talk. They had not been long together before Miss Maccerdene, leaning on her ivory cane, came to find her own chair. The two men responded to the old lady with pillow and footstool, and sat one on each side to pay her affectionate court.

No one asked for Maccerdene. His

aunt had not been able to derive any satisfaction from his presence. He had learned of Helena's engagement with stolid indifference; he despised Scranton and liked Adair, and when his aunt tried to pour out her doubts and anxieties to her nephew, he had irritably begged her to leave him out of the business.

Finally, at the end of her resources, Miss Maccerdene had sent for Scranton.

"Robert," she said to him now, "there's no one I can ask to come into our little talk but Lord Cecil. He really is an impersonal outsider, and, since Helena is prejudiced and Roger so changed, I have no friends to stand by me. The letter you wrote me has alarmed me beyond words, and now that you've come, I want you to tell me before Lord Cecil what you know of Mr. Adair."

"I don't shirk the question," he said abruptly. "It isn't a very gracious task to speak against another man, but in this case I don't think I have any choice. I'm jealous," he added; "that goes without saying."

"At any rate," Miss Maccerdene interrupted, "you are an honorable gentleman, and you'll tell me the truth. What do you know?"

And Scranton replied, rather to her astonishment: "Nothing at all against Sydney Adair. But if he's the man I think he is, I know enough to prevent Miss Desprey being his wife."

"You'd better fire ahead," said Manners shortly, "before Roger comes in, for he won't hear a word, you know, and quite right, too, I dare say."

"No one has asked you to hear, Lord Cecil," he said sharply. "What I have to say is entirely for Miss Maccerdene."

"I want Lord Cecil to stay," said the old lady. "I beg he will."

"When I turned up in Egypt, last winter," Scranton said, "I was looking for a man named Flanders. He had run off with another man's wife, stolen another man's money, and committed a lot of crimes of different sorts. I had no interest in any of them, very natu-

rally, but he had also murdered my brother in the Klondike, and I had sworn to hunt him out."

Scranton waited and bit his lip. His melancholy, his jealousy, his mental suffering had been great. His hand trembled as he lifted it to his lips and smoothed with his fingers the wrinkles along his cheek.

"Tom Moody, with whose wife Flanders had run away, was chasing him as well. But Moody died and with certain indications left the game to me. I tracked my man to Egypt, I followed him as far as the Sudan, and there I lost the trail. I have followed these clues for years and thought myself half a dozen times at the goal, only to be mistaken in the end. But I shall pick up that thread and go on with horrible fatality."

"Every description I have of Flanders tallies perfectly with this man, Adair. There are warrants out against him, but I haven't looked them out to see what they are."

Here Scranton briefly outlined a general account of the Denver and Western adventures of the desperado.

"I have nothing but my own account to settle," he said, "in the end, and the day I meet the man who killed my brother—"

Miss Lucy sat with her hand to her eyes, her lips quivered.

"Robert," she said, with great effort, "you're wrong, my dear boy."

Scranton looked up in surprise.

"This Adair may be a scoundrel, I think he is, but he's not a murderer. I dislike and distrust him, but he's not a murderer."

"My dear friend," said Scranton, with vast tenderness for one who was a bloodhound on a trail, "I don't like to talk to you about these things. You have asked me, but I think I had better stop."

"No, no," the old lady replied, "on the contrary, I want to hear everything you say."

Scranton turned himself about in his chair so that he completely faced his hearers.

"Adair has the pretension to want to marry Miss Desprey, to connect himself with an honorable family." He stopped here. "You must not let me be personal," he said hastily, "I lose my mind and self-control when I really take the thing seriously. Why, if for one moment she knew what Adair was, she would die with horror."

"Robert, Robert," exclaimed the old lady, "I don't know what to say or do. If Adair were really a murderer, do you know I think she'd forgive him. There's something terrible in his fascination for her, and there's something marvelous in her love for him."

"You say," Manners asked the Kentuckian, "that you followed your man up to the Sudan? Where did you see him there?"

"I've never seen him in my life," Scranton replied, "that's the trouble. I haven't even got a picture of him, and there wasn't a human being when I went up into the Klondike who would help to put me on his trail. He seems to have exercised the same peculiar fascination wherever he went. There was no one to tell me but Moody, and he told me that he had followed Flanders to the desert just below Omdurman. Flanders was in the campaign and there's the rub. I don't know what he was doing there; indeed poor Moody seems to have lost his mind completely, because he wrote me that Bill Flanders led the charge of the Thirtieth Lancers against the dervishes."

Manners laughed shortly.

"Yes, yes," nodded Scranton, "of course I take it as a mad man's fancy. Moody's wrongs drove him crazy. But at any rate, the poor old duffer wrote me that he had seen Flanders on a white horse lead the Lancers to victory and that afterward Flanders lay wounded beside him on the field."

Manners stared at Scranton and said slowly: "Why, of course he was cracked, that man of yours. Archie Hereford led the Lancers to their victory. All England knows it, and he died on the field. He had been raised to his commission that day and if he'd

lived he would have made a very brilliant officer."

Scranton said musingly: "Well, of course it wasn't Major Hereford I tracked. There's no doubt about it that he wasn't Flanders. I never supposed it."

Manners laughed aloud. He was beginning to think that Moody wasn't the only lunatic.

"For Heaven's sake," he exclaimed, "poor Archie Hereford, a Western desperado, with a lot of murders at his score! I say!"

"No, no," Scranton agreed, "of course not, but it's a very close trail. I'm beginning to think," he said, "that Moody did see his man in the Sudan. That if he didn't go into the campaign he was near to it, because when I left the post-boat *Tiflis* to caravan to the Red Sea, that is where I expected to find the man who led the charge of the Thirtieth Lancers."

"Ah," Manners nodded, "then you had further news of him?"

"Yes," said Scranton, "it seems that in the Sudan this man had engaged some natives to take him down to the Port."

"Well," said Manners, "did you find him there?"

"No, no, no!" Scranton cried in his intense voice. "I didn't. But I think I picked him up in a sand storm and kept him all night and saved his life." He clenched his hand. If he had only known then!

"He has a scar under his hair that a greaser gave him on the Texan plains," Scranton went on slowly. "He's a tall, well-made, vigorous blond man, with a daredevil insolence and plenty of charm. Women loved him and he made lots of friends everywhere." He stopped a moment and then put out to the two people: "Doesn't it look like Adair?"

Poor Miss Maccerdene faintly smiled. "My dear Robert," she said, "I'm afraid you're carried away by your sad revenge. I think you'd better give up your melancholy search. Feuds are dreadful things." She leaned forward

to him, putting her trembling hand out. "Your mother would not wish it so. If your brother could speak he would forgive him, no matter who he is."

And Robert, rising, exclaimed passionately: "Aunt Lucy, are you going to take up this man's cause?"

"I don't think he has any cause, one way or another," she said evasively. "You have no proof whatsoever against him. And don't you see, Robert, if Mr. Adair has really done this dreadful thing, Kentucky's the last place in the world he'd be found in and he wouldn't be anywhere in your neighborhood."

Scranton, standing before the fire, clasped his hands behind his back and bent his dark, troubled face upon the frail old lady.

"The man who killed my brother doesn't think I know it," he said, "and he's got that daredevil insolence that would lead him right up to the mouth of danger."

"And yet," Miss Maccerdene interposed, "you tell me that the Klondike murder was a dastardly deed and that your brother was shot in the dark."

To this Scranton made no reply, his mind had gone back to his clue. "If I could only trace him to Sudan, if I could only prove that Adair was at the battle of Ageiga. Of course he didn't lead any cavalry charge, but Moody must have seen him there. There must have been some confusion of identity between himself and Major Hereford!"

As Scranton said these words in the distinct voice of a man who is thinking his thoughts aloud to prove some point, Roger Maccerdene swung in through the portières of the drawing-room.

"Gad!" exclaimed Cecil Manners, putting his hand out toward him. "You were at the battle of Ageiga, Maccerdene, you were in that campaign. You ought to clear this thing up now. Why didn't we call you in before?"

Maccerdene glanced stupidly at the man before the fire.

"I'm sick of hearing all that rot about Archie Hereford at Ageiga," he said; "nobody ever does do Sydney justice, especially down here where all are against him."

He held on to Manners' chair as he stood slightly swaying, his blond face, reddened by whisky and by his outdoor life, still made ruddier by the firelight.

"Why, Ageiga," he said thickly, "was the greatest show on earth. Archie Hereford keeled over at the first round, and before any man knew what had happened there was another chap in the saddle, pushing us, swearing at us, cursing us through, yelling us through, and we cut our way into that deadly hell. I never saw anything like it," he repeated. "I'll never forget how that chap in Hereford's saddle stood up in his stirrups and yelled. I'll never forget how he pulled the men along, and it wasn't any joke with the devils waiting to hamstring your horses, waiting to rip open their bellies. When the thing was all over the man who led that charge wasn't anywhere to be found. But Archie Hereford was found all right, for he'd been picked up and carried through by native servants, with the dead, and nobody knew him."

Scranton had frozen to stone. His jaw dropped and his breath came hard between his lips. He could scarcely speak, and he finally forced the words out and at Maccerdene: "Then it was Mr. Sydney Adair who led the Thirtieth Lancers?" he asked.

And Roger said: "Why, what the hell does it matter to you who it was?"

And at Scranton's short laugh and at the little silence that fell he looked around and got his bearings, his dizzy head reeled into place, he put his hand to his forehead and stammered:

"Why, what do you all look so queer for? What difference does it make, anyway? Why, yes," he said slowly, "I remember, Sydney asked me not to speak about Ageiga."

He looked appealingly from face to face. Manners' wore a stolid gloom, and as there was nothing pleasing in Scranton's mask Roger chose his aunt's face to look at, and he asked her:

"I haven't done Sydney any *harm*, have I, Aunt Lucy? What's the row?"

CHAPTER III.

When Scranton's story to Aunt Lucy and Maccerdene's disloyalty had reached their end, still Helena in her corner did not move. She remained as she was until the room had cleared —until Lord Cecil had gone out with Roger; Aunt Lucy had wept on Robert Scranton's shoulder, and Helena saw the enemy of her lover put his arms around the old lady as though he had been her son, then lead her away as a man might lead his mother, strongly and tenderly. Helena heard Robert's horse brought up; from the window where she sat she could see him get into his saddle and ride down the road toward his plantation.

Then she came to life and left the window and her hiding. She had been a listener to facts which she knew would ruin her lover forever in the eyes of her people. She crossed the hall and went out of the side door to the stables. A few minutes later, on Mustapha, she started alone by the main road toward the forest station of Covington.

Helena telegraphed Sydney to meet her at Covington and that she would be there when his train should come in, and she knew that he would expect her and wait until she appeared. When she first started out she rode through the cold, bright beauty of the early winter afternoon, but before long dark stragglers of cloud across the sky massed above the country and in the softened atmosphere a sudden snowfall began to whiten in the air.

At the platform she left Mustapha with a boy to hold him and went into the station to find the fire lit in the little stove, blazing red behind the iron-glass; and back of the ticket-window, with its forbidding inscription over it, the station-master, his felt hat upon his head, sat smoking a villainous cigar.

"Ain't heared nothing from the express yet, Miss Desprey. Due 'bout four o'clock." Mr. Starkey looked at the young lady with admiration and interest. He had known her all his life. She was the beauty of his dis-

trict, he took as curious and personal part in her train of admirers as he might; indeed, he admired her very much himself.

"Got a rig out there?" he asked.

"I've ridden over, Mr. Starkey. Would you come out and tie my horse and blanket him for me? And while you're doing so I'd like to telephone, if I may."

When Starkey had obligingly shuffled out Helena rang up The Lawns and bade the man who answered to tell her aunt that she had been held up by the storm and was going to ride into the Fellows' place and would stay there until the snow stopped falling.

Helena was presumably telephoning from a village known as the Ashley Settlement, and she chose that direction because it was something like twelve miles from the place in which she really was. She also selected the Fellows' plantation as a refuge because it was the only house thereabouts without a telephone.

Then she went out on the platform to wait for the train, her eyes on the tracks which the snow was beginning to cover, her heart beating and aching, her brain and nerves under a strain that only one thing could soothe. She couldn't let herself look toward little Mustapha, against whom the snow beat.

"Foreign bred, I reckon," Starkey said, as he came back from tying the horse.

"Yes, poor dear," said his mistress, "he's a beautiful Arab horse and he doesn't like this country very well."

They went slowly toward him as she spoke, and Starkey stooped to loosen the strap at Mustapha's head, but the Arab had reached the limit of his endurance. With a spring and a snort which only a stallion knows how to give, he tore his bridle from the agent's hand and with a swirl of his gray body and a flash of his tail he was gone like a prisoner set free, down the road from the station and out of sight.

"By gum!" said the station-master; he held a piece of Mustapha's bridle in his hand.

"Heavens!" Helena exclaimed. "What shall I do? And listen, there's the train."

The man rushed back to his post where the telegraph-instrument ticked like mad, and Helena, forgetting Mustapha and everything else in the world, stood scarcely breathing while the train from the North rolled in.

A bag of mail, a crate of condensed milk were taken out by Mr. Starkey, and that was all. A word between the station-master and the conductor, and the train, already late, started along on its way, its serpentine line of cars swinging off in the snowy air. As it passed out of sight Starkey said to the lady of The Lawns:

"Comp'ny didn't come, Miss Desprey. There's a second section to this yere train, the conductor says. But they'll keep it down to Lexington on the switch thar till the up train's gone through."

"Let's go back into the station, Mr. Starkey, and see if there isn't a telegram for me."

"You-all better phone to The Lawns," the station-master suggested. "I reckon they'll be mighty scared when that hoss runs in."

When they were once more inside he asked: "You-all wasn't goin' to meet a gentleman, was you? Tall Englishman, been here before, same one took a train a month ago, in the morning, for the No'th?"

That might have been the guest. What did Mr. Starkey know of him?

"Why, that man came in at noon, didn't get off heah, thar wasn't no train, but he came in with a team and stopped to ask about the trains No'th."

Here the agent interrupted his information to climb up on the board seat that ran around the room, and he went on talking as he lit the lamp.

"He-all asked the way over to Scranton's, shortest road, and he drove off over that yere way."

Helena hoped that the station-master couldn't see her heart beat, for its pulse seemed to be actually without her riding-coat.

"Mr. Starkey, can you leave here

long enough to get me some sort of a rig? I'll give you ten dollars if you'll drive me or have some one take me as fast as you can."

A horror of the thing seized upon her, a sudden dreadful fear clung to her like a garment of death, and her life's blood froze within her.

When Starkey had left her to go home, a quarter of a mile away, she rang up the telephone again. Without hesitation she called up Scranton's house, not knowing what to ask or what to say. There was at first a curt response, then the communication was abruptly cut off. She rang and rang in vain. The silence at the other end of the wire had a sinister importance.

She ran out of the station to the platform and, looking wildly to right and left, saw that the storm had ceased, that it had grown colder and stiller, and that the night promised to be fine, and that as far as she could see there was no sign of any wagon or any team.

She determined to walk to Scranton's and started out to do so. In her riding-habit and boots she hurried through the muddy road, and as she went on the encouraging thought that Adair had told her he would be sure to clear up his score came to her. That, then, was what he was doing at Robert Scranton's. If Robert would only, only listen! This solution helped her; this belief in Adair, and that he would carry it well through gave her courage to take her road.

CHAPTER IV.

When Scranton found himself once again at home and before his fire it took him a long time to gain his composure.

He took up his pistol, and, more to occupy himself than anything else, he refilled its chambers, then put the weapon down.

He had given his household of negroes leave to attend a wedding in the plantation-house, and the general exodus left him entirely alone; but before his own man servant had gone he had opened the door of Scranton's

study, and "fo' comp'ny," as he said, let in two bloodhounds of the plantation pack, dogs trained to track men down and whose use was not always a sinecure in Kentucky. The two hounds were especial favorites of Scranton's Juno and Neptune, great, beautiful beasts.

As they came along in he spoke to them, and they laid down at his feet obediently, stretching their sinewy limbs, quiet enough to look at, but their eyes and jaws told their breed.

Suddenly Scranton heard a vehicle drive up and stop before his door. He got up and went to the window to see a man in long, loose-sleeved coat get out of the trap. A man in a soft felt hat, smoking a good cigar. Scranton knew him immediately and said his name. He paid his driver, and the man drove away almost before Scranton himself opened the door to let the visitor in. As Scranton recognized the man he could scarcely believe his eyesight. An exultant delight came over him at the first look, a feeling nearest ecstasy to any he had ever known. Within his walls! Within his walls!

As Adair greeted him in a matter-of-fact way and followed him into the library, Scranton pointed to his dogs and said:

"I'm alone in the house except for these."

His tone was significant, and the brutes to whom he referred stood on either side of the fire like sleek sentinels, brindled and burnished, with fine eyes and loose-dripping fangs.

Scranton was pale as death.

Adair threw his hat down, took off his overcoat, and threw it down as well. He had a light cane in his hand, which he put on a chair.

"Hello," he said, rubbing his hands, walking up and down before the dogs. He went over to the fire and bent to the blaze.

The hounds looked him over and looked at the master. One of them went and sniffed at Adair's hat and cloak and then without further orders lay down in front of the objects.

Scranton had wanted some voice to

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speak to him in his solitude, but this night he had not thought of this voice, and he didn't really know whether or not he was glad. He was no coward, but the situation had come upon him like a storm. He shut the door behind him, turned the key, and put it in his pocket. Then he went over and sat down tranquilly in the chair he had left.

"Now," he said to himself, "I must be perfectly cool. I don't know what he's here for and I want my wits about me. I can't very well get hold of that pistol without awakening his curiosity, and of course he doesn't know that I dream he's Bill Flanders."

"These dogs," Scranton said, putting his hand on the head of the brute nearest him, "are trained to hunt men. You know the breed, don't you? We've had some desperate crimes down here and my people have made me keep them. Of course," he said lightly, "their trade is a sinecure."

Adair, standing between the dogs, looked at them coolly. Then he looked over at Scranton. If Scranton had not been a little dazed by excitement he would have seen the gravity on the face of his guest and the dignity in the man's bearing. But he was not studying Adair's expression, he was taking his measure, thinking out his physique.

Adair's eyes, wandering over the room, saw the revolver and also understood, perhaps, more of the other man's excitement than Scranton knew.

"You seem," said Adair, with something like a smile, "to be expecting company, Scranton. I'm not armed," he added simply.

And Scranton answered him with the first words that came to his mind:

"Neither was my brother when you shot him in his sleep."

Adair gave him a quick look and threw back his head.

"If you make one move," said Scranton, "the dogs will spring upon you."

Adair knew his position to be an utterly false one; there would be nothing between this man and himself but plain dislike if he could tell him the truth.

Scranton repeated: "As for your not

being armed, I wouldn't believe you on oath."

"Then it's hardly worth while my talking to you, is it?" said Adair coolly.

As the dog by Adair's coat stirred his master said: "Down, sir!" in a tone so violent and unlike his usual kind commands that the hound slunk back, but kept his watchful eyes on the guest.

"What do you want to do with me?" Adair asked. "When you let me in just now I saw that you knew."

Scranton rose from his chair, bidding himself be calm.

"If you're unarmed," he said, "what in hell are you here for, under my roof, to flaunt your identity in my face? I don't shoot you because I want to hear something about my brother. I've spent all these years training myself to meet you," he said—his excitement, his emotion were pitiful—"I've learned how to shoot and to fence, and I know something of sword practise and wrestling, for, by God, I never knew how we would meet. But I'm not an expert, such as you are, and I'm not at all a good hand at shooting an unarmed man, and I'm going to have a hard time doing it."

Here Adair asked politely:

"Do you mind if I light a cigarette? Thanks." He did so with entire coolness, throwing the match into the fire.

"I'd like to know the reason for this gentle reception," he asked. "That is, I'd like to know if you've heard anything about me since I left this vicinity."

"I'm not disposed to answer any questions you may put," his host retorted. "Before the time my people return from the sugar-house I want to clean up your score, and—"

Adair interrupted him. "That's just what I've come here to do, if I can. I admit I didn't expect to find you so entirely prepared."

His sang-froid maddened Scranton. The Southerner realized now that in his delay the moment for shooting this man was past; it would be difficult now for him to take any step.

"Why didn't you keep away?" he

asked him abruptly. "You slunk off fast enough in the East."

"I wasn't ready then," Adair replied.

"Ready!" exclaimed the other man. "Do you mean to say you've got the nerve to think I'd fight you in fair field?"

And Adair retorted: "No, I've been feeling a tingling in my shoulder-blades for several weeks."

"If I hadn't wanted to hear something about Henry," said the other, "I would have shot you when you came in this door."

"That," returned Adair quickly, "is the first good turn Punch Scranton ever did me."

"Punch Scranton!" exclaimed his brother. "And you call him by his old name! You *are* Bill Flanders, you fiend!" He came across to Adair and stared at him, his features working. "And you killed my mother as well!"

As Adair looked at the excited mask of humanity something like pity for the dupe he was making of this man came over him. "Come," he said quietly, "come, you don't know what you're talking about. I don't blame you for your feelings and for hating me. But I confess that I can't talk to you very well between these hounds. Listen to me, will you?"

But Scranton scarcely heard him. "You coward! You steal a man's wife over a pack of lies, then you kill a decent man who tries to protect her, in his sleep."

The Westerner knew his only safety was to remain immovable, one excited gesture would bring the dogs to his throat. He also knew just where Scranton's pistol lay and determined that the other man should not get it. The dogs flanked him now, one on either side, rigid as bronze.

Adair didn't want to die, and he determined not to do so any sooner for this one man. He said, still quietly: "I thought you asked me to speak of your brother?"

"Curse you! Why did you kill him in his sleep?"

"If you ask me those questions I shall be forced to speak ill of the dead."

"He took your mistress," said the other, "when she was tired of your lies and your brutalities."

Adair took a puff at his cigarette. "Curiously enough," he said easily, "and I dare say only interesting to these dogs, who seem absorbed in me, I find your spirit of revenge, your long hatred, worse than any open crime."

Scranton did not deign to reply. He spoke to his bloodhounds, who reluctantly turned their backs on Adair and came to their master and lay down at his feet.

Then Adair said to his host sternly: "Since you haven't shot me in the back and hesitate now to shoot me dead as I stand here, even if I would let you, will you listen to me for fifteen seconds?"

"There's nothing in God's world, my man," the other replied, "could change my hate for you if you talked till doomsday."

"I have no right," Adair was saying to himself, "to let this man feed on lies and revenge and to track me to death for a mistake. Yet—" How was he to spare the woman?

He went on: "In spite of your agreeable fair-mindedness, Scranton, I'm still going to tell you something. I've been trying to clear up that old score during the past few weeks. I've done what I could, all along the line. I'm the road-agent and the bank-robber and the rest of it, but I've managed somehow to wash up a lot of old scores, everything but this infernal business."

"You can close it to-night," the other interrupted, "right now."

Adair threw his fine head sharply up. "You're nursing a lie," he said, "and it isn't fair to either of us. What if I told you that I never killed your brother?"

To his surprise his companion laughed in his face.

"Why, I've been waiting for that, for the last quarter of an hour. It's your natural card."

"Look out!" said Adair, drawing in his breath. "You wouldn't believe me?"

"Not on your oath."

"But if I should fetch you proofs?"

Scranton's voice was cutting as a sword as he answered: "I dare say you could wheedle them out of any woman in order to get your point; in order to get your point you'd hide behind that miserable creature's skirts."

The blood rushed into Adair's face until he was black; he could hardly get out the word: "Stop!"

The sweat broke out on his brow. When his boiling blood had cooled down and he realized that he couldn't make one move to defend himself without imperiling his throat, he also realized that he could control his passion. He did so and was able to say evenly: "You don't know how you help me, Scranton." He bowed his head. "Thank you very much. When I went West I did expect to wipe this off the slate. I didn't care much about how I stood in your dark mind, excepting that it affected another person."

His reference to Miss Desprey was the torch needed to kindle Scranton's passion.

"And you dare ask that girl to marry you! What a fiend you are, what a blackguard!"

"Come," cried his companion, "I've said I wouldn't fight you, but I'll fight you now."

Scranton laughed.

"Fight me," he echoed. "You shall not go out of this house alive."

Hemmed in by the hounds, confronted by his host, Adair was so cool that Scranton waited to see him draw his revolver on him.

"I don't know why I care, blackguard and murderer that you are. When she knows the truth she'll hate you fast enough even to suit me."

The words were a sharp shock to the other man, who had promised her to return with a clean page. It was with something like triumph that he said: "She happens to know who I am—all but the fact that I can't clear this murder from my soul. Not that it's any of your business," he went on, with the first roughness and rudeness he had shown, "but if I don't get out to her

alive, you tell her I tried to speak to you and you gave me the lie in my throat."

This mention of her brought forcibly to Scranton's mind his remembrance of Helena on the deck of the Nile boat. He could hear her say: "It's a pity to take life, isn't it?" How would she feel when she knew that he had killed the man she loved?

"It's getting late," Adair said practically, "and I intend going North on the express. It's a good half hour's walk to the station."

Scranton stared. "What do you mean?"

"Why, I mean that I'm in a bad position all around."

And the other man interrupted him violently. "God! You think that because Miss Desprey has the folly to fancy you that I'm going—— But I'm not!"

"No," his guest broke in, "I look for nothing from you but hard stupidity. You lie when you say that I killed your brother in his sleep. But when you say that I'm not fit to touch the ground of Kentucky with one woman you tell God's truth. You'd better let me go, Scranton, you'd better let me go. I'll never cross your path again. I'm leaving the States forever, and I shall bury myself in the Sudan."

The other looked at him startled. "You mean to say," he asked, "that you relinquish everything here?"

There was something like a smile in Adair's blue eyes.

"I'm engaged to be married to her," he said quietly, "and she knows what I am. That is, she thinks I'm a gambler and a thief and the rest of it, but I don't think she believes I'm a murderer." He lighted another cigarette and put it in his mouth and puffed it. "What I came here mainly to talk to you about you have not let me say. I wanted you to tell Miss Desprey that it's no use—tell her I went away to clean this up and I couldn't——" He hesitated a moment, then looked at Scranton as though he took him into his confidence. "Perhaps it would be better to tell her that I never intended to clean things

up and that I've gone back to the other woman. Tell her what you like, and I give you my word that I will leave you the field in which to do so."

Scranton listened. He remembered how he had held Helena against her will, how much she still meant to him. He keenly watched the face of the other man, waiting still for him to draw some weapon and destroy him. He didn't fear him at all, however, and now, as he looked at Adair, his superb type, his big splendid frame, the underlying charm of the man struck him painfully. Helena had torn herself from his arms and had gone to this man, willing to share his many disgraces.

"You low hound!" Scranton breathed of a sudden to him. "To win and break a woman's heart, to take all she has to give and then to leave her like this. Why, I don't doubt that in your colossal vanity you think she will follow you."

At this Adair cried passionately: "I think her name has been spoken once too often. Let me go or do what you will, I'm sick of your infernal company, Scranton, and I tell you so to your face."

And here, with its singular modern ineptness, with its indifference to life and death, the telephone rang violently at Scranton's side. One of the hounds bayed. His master silenced him, and from the table at his side took up the receiver and held it to his ear. At the sound of the voice at the other end his face flushed. But Adair heard him say in a cool voice: "Haven't the least idea—— No—— No." And then Scranton put the receiver sharply back, cut off the communication, and turned his face, transfigured by the full force of his hate, on his guest.

"Let you go!" he cried. "Let you go! Watch him, boys, watch him! What a fool I am! Your infernal magnetism that drew that woman to Alaska and Helena Desprey to her ruin has made me listen to you. But now for her sake alone I'd shoot you like a wild beast. Listen," he said as the telephone rang again, "that is she at the station. She's waiting for you, where you told her to wait while you've been

lying afresh to me and giving me this rot about giving her up. You've planned to run off with her to-night, but, thank God, you came here first!"

Adair, before whom the dogs stood rigid, drew a long breath, as though he took life in with it. The ring at the telephone, now that he knew it was her voice, gave him new courage.

Scranton had pointed to Adair's hat on the floor and the dog nearest scented it, then took his place as indicated by his master, before the other man.

"You killed my brother without giving him warning, but I'll give you a chance for your life. I'll hold these dogs here for a quarter of an hour and you may run to your train and to your woman, then I'll set the dogs free."

Robert Scranton's mother would not have known her son in this brute, with his feelings unchained. Justice and retribution had not been strong enough to make him kill his enemy, but jealousy put her shoulder to the wheel.

"No," said Adair in a low tone, "you won't do that. I ran for my life through the Chilcoote Pass once for this crime, and, by Heaven, I won't do it again. Didn't you," he appealed abruptly, "see that trail that I went over?"

"What of it?"

"It was a five weeks' march and I had a gangrene foot that bled and froze."

"What of it?" said Scranton brutally. "Do you think I care?"

"Possibly not," returned Adair. "But it was a hard trail."

In his voice and bearing there was a dignity that still was strong enough to make an impression on the Southerner. Adair's brows were bent over his brilliant eyes, he looked before him as if he saw into the world whither Tom Moody had gone.

"I played a low game on Moody," he confessed, "but I guess he's forgiven me by this."

He was glad Scranton's hate had helped him protect the woman to the end. But while holding Scranton's attention he had another end in view. On the mantel, within his reach, was

the revolver, and he was going to get it, if by one quick movement he could do so.

He gave of a sudden, a cry—the cry of the greasers to the sheep-dogs, a cry so wild and imperious that it will sting any animal's ears to attention. He seized the revolver and fired at the dog in front of him. The animal fell like a stone and at the same moment the second one sprang, with a long bay like a bull, at Adair's throat. As the beast struck him in the chest the pistol was knocked out of his hand. Adair swerved and caught the dog with both his powerful hands and fastened his fingers deep in the furry throat.

Scranton picked up the pistol. He knew that there was only one more chamber loaded. He wouldn't shoot as he watched the battle, he didn't want to shoot a man fighting for his life. Adair's muscles strained, the veins started out on his forehead. He ground his fingers around the gullet and strangled the hound, whose eyes started from their sockets.

As Adair flung the beast down and lifted himself Scranton stood covering him. Whether or not the Kentuckian meant to fire on the unarmed man, at any rate Adair thought so and started forward, crying: "No, by God!"

But Scranton's bullet struck him in the left arm and ripped up the flesh. Adair knocked the pistol from his hand and, lifting his right arm with all his force, he struck Scranton a terrible blow. The battle with the dog had loosened in him all his brute force. He hadn't killed Punch Scranton, but he seemed to have killed this man, and the other fell across his own hearth, between his dead hounds, his head striking heavily on the marble.

Stunned by what he had done, Adair stooped over his enemy, from whose face the blood poured. He felt for Scranton's heart and found it still. He called him in vain.

The room was terribly still, with the lifeless dogs and the lifeless master stretched before him. There wouldn't be a chance for him if Scranton's negroes returned and found him dead.

Adair now had but one thought, to escape, to get away, and, hatless, disordered as he was, he turned to go and found the door locked. The obstacle gave him a new impetus. He tore the window open and dropped out onto the frozen field. As he ran, he said to himself: "Running for a train! Who'd think it to see me?"

He stopped to tie up his arm, which bled profusely. He heard some one cry "Hello!" and call again.

"It's the niggers," he said. "They'll have to run pretty well to catch me. They can't shoot me in the dark. I'm all right if the moon doesn't rise and if they don't set any more dogs on me."

He heard the voice again. He thought he heard his own name: "Sydney, Sydney!" But he didn't stop.

Before he reached the road he heard the hoofs of a horse beating on the sodden fields. The animal dashed by him, and he saw that it was riderless—then, as he reached the road he had come up with it again and this time he called to the beast and caught it by its bridle-rein. It was Mustapha. He could hardly believe his sight.

"Ssh— Ssh!" he said to the stallion. "Aramalek!"

Mustapha wore a side-saddle, and before he had ceased to think what it meant that he should be riderless and what precious burden he must have thrown to be so free, Adair sprang into the saddle.

"I'll have to go on," he said between his teeth. "Where should I look for her? How should I know where to go? Come," he said to the stallion, "come!"

CHAPTER V.

He heard some one calling in the road again, some one was evidently standing there. He saw the shadow in the moonlight. He would have torn by, but the idea that he might have news of Helena and know whether or not she were lying bruised by the roadside made him draw up. He leaned from the saddle.

"Helena!"

"Oh, Sydney! Thank God! Thank God!"

She almost threw herself against the side of the horse, clinging to the saddle and to his knee.

"Sydney, Sydney!"

"Little girl," he said hoarsely, "you mustn't stop me now. There's a train North and I'm riding to make it."

His tone was not to be mistaken; he had neither hat nor overcoat in the winter night. Never had he felt anything so strong as those woman's hands clasping his hand and holding the rein. He had never heard anything more appealing than her voice.

"Let you go, like this, when something terrible has happened and you're speeding away. Not without me."

"Come, then," he cried in his hoarse, anxious voice, "climb up to me."

Used as she was to mounting from the ground, she put her foot on his and he dragged her up to him. Guiding the horse with one hand, he had no way to hold her, but she clung to him. His brain was sick with wonder when he would hear the cries behind him and how and by whom he would be held up at the station. But his head was bent over the woman's head and against her cheek his was cold.

"Your arm is hurt, what has happened? You've no hat, no coat, and—" She stopped herself, for she had determined never to ask him a question.

"I was coming to you as fast as I could. I was coming to that dreadful house," she added quickly.

His lips were close to her ear; even then he realized how wonderful it was to touch her again.

"I found Mustapha running across the fields, he knew my voice. I can't tell you when you lean against me like this what has happened—"

And she interrupted, "Don't tell me, I never want to know. It's enough to see that you are living."

The station light shone out at the hilltop, the moon was high enough for them to see each other. They had to reckon with Starkey, for the rig which he had routed out for Miss Desprey

was just pulling up as the riders drew rein at the platform. But Mr. Starkey and his rig were the only things in sight. There was no sign that Sydney Adair had been pursued.

"Hello!" cried the station-master.

And Adair said: "I found Miss Desprey's horse running away. I caught him and he dragged me over hill and dale. Hurt me, too, a little." He pointed to his hanging arm and to his muddy clothes. "Don't bother, but have you got any wet stuff, agent?"

Adair's solution was plausible and aroused no suspicion in the station-master's mind. He was in any case busy with his train-schedule, which he had left too long.

"Say," he said, "I reckon you-all better ride ovah to my house. My wife will fix you up first-class."

"Just give me a drink of something, will you?" Adair replied. "I'm going to take that train North, though I don't look much like a Pullman passenger."

At any moment the station door might be pushed in by the men who were sure to follow him. Or the telephone would ring and give a message. As the agent went to get the liquor which he kept under his desk in the ticket-office, Adair hurriedly turned to the woman who stood pale as death at his side.

"I promised to come back to you when I had cleared up my score. Nothing's cleared up, and I want you to say good-by to me now. Go on over with that rig to the agent's; I want you to do so."

At her look he said half-desperately: "Why, don't you see, I can't be anything to any woman on earth? I'm a dead man—I killed Scranton—"

The girl's eyelids flickered. "I'm almost glad," she said; "almost glad. He hated you; he was a cruel enemy."

"He set his dogs on me and fired on me, and I defended myself. They'll be here for me now at any moment, and I want you to go."

Here Helena gave a cry, for below his cuff the blood was beginning to trickle.

"Hush!" he said sternly. "If that

man suspects, he'll stop me. I tied my handkerchief on, but it slipped."

She tore her thick white cravat from her neck, and bound his arm and wrist.

Covered to his hips with mud, flakes of it on his face, his eyes haggard and his lips parched, he was not a likely passenger for any train.

The agent came back here with the liquor, which Adair swallowed.

"That little hoss must 'a' given you all a pretty rough time. You don't look fit to get on a cyar. Why, the hoss ain't been gone from heah more'n hour. Foreign-bred, Miss Desprey says."

He stood grinning at them, charmed by the diversion they made in his routine, and by the pale lady with her throat made bare.

"Why, you ought to have asked me for a rag," he said. "I could have hunted up something, and you'll get cold."

He made another friendly trip back to his office, where he kept all sorts of things, and brought out a gaudy silk handkerchief, which he insisted that Miss Desprey should put about her throat. She tied it with trembling hands—and still no one came, the door did not open, and no one cried: "Stop! Stop!" to the man who had killed Robert Scranton.

But just then the telegraph-instrument signaled, and this time the agent went back to his own affairs. Helena took the time granted her then for her own. She put both her hands around Adair's neck, clasping her hands behind his head.

"You're not going without me now. I'm going, too. You're never going away again without me."

"Be reasonable," he said. "You can't throw in your luck with a man like me."

And she cried: "Like you, Sydney? Oh, don't you know what you are? I do, and I don't care what people think. I don't care what you've done. You're mine, and I'm going with you now."

As his hard-set face let no light into her, she faltered here and loosed her hands. "Unless you don't love me," she murmured.

There were steps on the platform, and he said:

"They're coming. Hark, Helena, let me go. Stand away. Don't be seen with me."

She burst into tears and covered her face; it was too much for her. He put his arm around her and drew her toward him as the whistle sounded down the line. The station-master rushed out and banged the door.

"There's not another woman in the world like you," Adair said; "let me hold you once like this, and then bid me good-by."

But he couldn't release her, for he saw by the whiteness of her face that if he did so, she would fall. Drawing her toward the door, he said, half-roughly:

"Come, then, come!"

On the platform he called to Starkey, who stood at the far end, waiting for the incoming train:

"You've got to hustle and get that Arab horse into the baggage-car as quick as you can."

The train came in on the switch, and the detached engine ran off for water. As the express was already four hours late, a little delay, more or less, didn't hinder the schedule. Mustapha, reduced to utter exhaustion, made no objections to being landed in the baggage-car.

Then, as Starkey came back to them, Sydney said:

"I'll give you five dollars for that hat of yours."

"Gosh," said the station-master, "take it, and welcome." And he grinned as Adair snatched it and put it on his head.

"This looks to me," he said, winking, "like a clear case of hoss-stealing."

Then Helena said to him ardently: "Mr. Starkey, you've known me ever since I was a little girl. I'm running away with this gentleman. I'm going to marry him."

"Gee!" exclaimed Mr. Starkey.

The engine, with a profound jerk, hitched itself to its train; a line of sleepers drew up in front of the three.

"Stand by me, Mr. Starkey. You know what Kentucky girls are. My mother ran away to be married."

"I ain't got a word to say," said the eager man. "I ain't seen neither of you, not a mite. You can bank on me."

He was completely carried away with the romance. Miss Desprey was an heiress, long ago of age; she knew her own mind, and there was a gallant recklessness in this gentleman who had caught the foreign horse.

But Helena had not done. She seized his hand.

"Thank you," she said, and wrung it. "They'll be telephoning for me all over the country. Don't answer the telephone."

Starkey nodded and grinned. "Why, they're ringing now," he said, "like hell! Let 'em ring!"

From the end of the car to which Adair had helped her, she repeated: "Let them ring, and God bless you!"

CHAPTER VI.

The tracks, rolling out from under the wheels of the car, gleamed like silver bands. The forests and the blue-grass fields were covered with winter's rime; and the last the two on the platform saw of Covington was the dark curtain that the pine forest drew across the land. Adair, standing by the side of the richest heiress in the county, the most lovely and the most desired of women, couldn't believe that no one had stopped him yet, and wondered how long this Elysium could last.

"Until the next station," he thought. "We'll be boarded there. I'll be routed out like a stowaway."

He found out from the conductor, who regarded them with amused curiosity, that Ravensworthy was the next stop, two hours on, unless there should be another wreck on the line.

Adair refused to go inside, declaring that his arm was painless, and the thing he intended to do was to stand right there until the next curve of the road; meaning by that until Fate took its next turn.

As the conductor left them, he said this aloud and bent down to the girl. Close to the fragrance of her hair, to the warmth of her bare throat, to the cool, sweet touch of her cheek, he pressed his face, held her close to him, thinking that for two hours, come what would, this happiness had been created for him. The winds sang to them; they cut into a bit of forest, and it was dark.

When the train struck the light again, Helena said:

"I want you to come back into the car, Sydney, for my sake, and let somebody dress your arm. There must be a doctor among the passengers."

But he urged: "No, no, wait a few moments. I can bear this miserable little hurt; my body's full of wounds and scars, I guess I can stand this scratch."

But he yielded at length to her entreaties, more for her sake than his own, and followed her with a sigh, as though once within that car he would begin to relinquish her. The sleeper was empty except for the porter, who dozed at the other end. Adair made Helena sit by the window in the state-room, while he went away with the porter to find some one to dress his arm.

Helena, left alone, the only occupant of the rocking car, in the interval between his going and his return, had time to calm her nerves somewhat, and to realize how far she had put out to sea. The thought of what her runaway match might do to her aunt she couldn't even approach. And she couldn't even think of Robert Scranton; it made her shudder to her soul. Her only way to close the picture was to remember Adair and his caresses.

For the first time she had a moment to think of what Maccerdene had told, the charge at Ageiga, and she preferred to think of that than to think of Scranton's gloomy house. Lifted high on a white horse, she seemed to see Adair ride to her, and she cried to that courageous figure: "Mine, my man!"

And with this light on her face, she welcomed him when he came back to her down the car.

Adair had made himself more presentable; his dress was arranged and

his arm bound up. He was smoking a good cigar. He didn't look like a murderer or like a man running from justice, but more like a wounded soldier. As he sat down beside her, he lifted her hand and held it to his face.

"I've never seen such a light on any woman's face," he whispered. "It can't be that you were thinking about me."

Leaning close to him, she answered him in a way that he was far from expecting. "I was thinking about that charge at Ageiga, I was thinking about how you rode into the dervishes; I was thinking about the desert and the Sudan, and of how I loved you there and you didn't know it."

But he had started back from her with an expression of surprise on his face, and he exclaimed:

"The charge of Ageiga! For God's sake, what do you know about it? Has Maccerdene—"

"Poor Roger," said the girl, with great compassion. "Oh, don't blame him, Sydney. He's so ill and so wrecked. He had been drinking, and Robert got it out of him."

"Ah," said Adair meaningly, nodding his head, "that was how Scranton knew."

Here the train slowed, and Helena exclaimed:

"Oh, why do we stop, why?"

But Adair soothed her, telling her it was only a freight wreck, and they would go along directly.

"We are already late on the two hours' run."

On his part, during his absence from her, he had determined on his course, and that now as they had gone so far he would fight for her and for them both to the end.

"Such as my lot is," he said, "you've cast yours with it, little girl, and we've got to look it in the face. There isn't much doubt that they will stop us at the next station and arrest me for killing Robert Scranton. It's a personal feud, and I shouldn't be surprised if I got out of it in Kentucky. But I couldn't clear up any of my past, and it will all come out."

She faced him, drinking in everything he said. Her soft lips trembled and her eyes were like stars.

"Yes," she breathed. "Yes, I know, Sydney."

He put out his hand to her with a gesture rather despairing: "I'm afraid you can't go back now, my darling."

"I don't want to go back."

"We can't go any farther," he said. "I mean as we are, sweetheart—before we get to Ravensworth it will be morning."

The color rose all along her face, and she said bravely: "If there's any one on this train who could marry us, I would like to be married before we leave my own State."

They were married by a Catholic priest before they crossed the border of Kentucky, and they had not been man and wife an hour before the train was flagged at a station, and Adair, looking out, saw an agent hand an envelope to the porter, and his heart nearly stopped beating. The incident had apparently no connection with him, for in a second or two more the train moved along. Presently, however, the porter fetched a despatch through the car and gave it to Adair. He opened it with his wife at his side.

Got to Scranton's just as you left. Scranton is conscious and will pull through. He wants me to say that he considers the score cleaned up.

MACCERDENE.

Adair folded the paper lengthwise between his fingers, looking at his wife. He couldn't speak for a few moments, and then he said:

"Well, he's the right stuff, after all."

"Roger?" exclaimed his wife. "Oh, he adores you, Sydney. I think it would kill him if he thought you had lost confidence in him."

But Adair said: "I didn't mean him; I mean Scranton. You see, he's done what he could to set me free, after all. I pity him," he added; "and if I could only tell him and make him believe that I never killed Henry Scranton—but I never can."

"Why?" she asked. "Why?"

He waited a moment, and before he could answer, she said: "I never really thought you killed him. It was that woman."

But her husband put up his hand, and his face darkened. "Never," he said sternly, "speak her name again. Let her go."

By Helena's side, at length alone in their stateroom, Adair shut out the world from them, and the names of men and women he had ever known, and his own history and other histories, and turned to her like a parched traveler to a health-giving spring. With his arm about her, he folded her in her runaway dress to his heart. She seemed divinely pure as she dropped there, her head on his shoulder, and so much part of him that he was surprised to hear her call his name with a sob in her voice. As he bent over, she whispered: "Be good to me."

He remembered that he had asked Mary Moody if she were good to her husband and to the children, and how then he had longed with a heartache to know that goodness that all the world holds dear, and to be sure that it surrounded those he would never see again.

"Sydney, you're all I have. Be good to me."

He wondered if she feared him, if anything in his past would make her doubt him. Then the feeling gave place to another, for she knew that she was the one woman who, with him, had seen the heart of the star, and that heart was his own soul, and that she knew him as God meant him to be, and as God made him to be.

She was lying on his breast, and he put his hand under her cheek and turned her face up to him. As he kissed her then she might have been satisfied. They left the curtain up at the window, and the moon, riding high, followed them through the Southern States all the way to its setting during their wedding-night.



THE WILL

By Henry Gallup Paine

THE thought that Ormiston Phye was lying sick abed at home, and would not be one of the faithful few to open up the club-house in the woods at the beginning of the trout season, spoiled all of Fenway's pleasurable anticipations for his customary spring holiday. Different as they could well be in character and appearance, and seldom seeing each other excepting on these yearly outings, the two men were warmly attached. I always felt that Phye's hearty, wholesome, breezy companionship was quite as beneficial a tonic for Fenway as were the fresh air, outdoor life, and keen sport which they enjoyed together.

The event strengthened my impression. At first Fenway was all for not going fishing that year, but finally he agreed to "go through the motions," as he described it, if I would accompany him. There was no pretense that I would fill the void left by Phye's absence. Each of us thought the other needed the change, and each was willing to make the necessary sacrifice. A week was time enough to prove to both the futility of our mutual concessions.

I offered no objection when Fenway, on the afternoon of the seventh day, suddenly reeled in his line and announced his intention of returning to the club-house, of packing up and absconding before the others came in.

"I'm going to look in on Ormiston

on my way home," he declared. "I want to see him. I have a curious feeling that he wants to see me. Anyhow, I'm going. My God! Look at that!"

We had topped a little eminence that gave us a view of the club-house. The flag was at half-mast. "Too late!" he whispered. There was a sob in his voice. Slowly and silently we finished our dreary walk over the trail.

Few men—none whom I ever encountered—have attained such mastery over their emotions as Fenway. His patience, his self-control, his immunity to surprise, as exhibited by him in his countless investigations of mysterious happenings, were extraordinary. His wrath, accordingly, when upon inquiry at the club-house, he discovered that the half-masting of the flag was due to a combination of a kinked lanyard and a lazy chore-boy, and not to news of the death of Ormiston Phye, was terrifying in its unexpectedness. His thankfulness that the alarm was a false one was not proof against his indignation that a false alarm should have been given. The violence of the storm that shook him testified to his fondness for his friend.

In his hurry to get away, in his frequent glances at his watch on the long drive to the railroad, in his belief at arriving in time to catch the evening train, I seemed to read a feeling on Fenway's part—perhaps no more than an impression, for he was the last man to be swayed by superstitious influences—that the half-masted flag was a signal

for him to hasten. Once on board the cars, however, he quickly lapsed into his customary state of calm.

"There's no need of your traveling three hundred miles to see a man you hardly know," he said to me. "I suppose you will keep right on to New York. I shall change at Albany."

"So shall I," I replied. "You can't conceal from me that you've at least a fear that our vacation may have a serious ending. In that event, if I may not be able to cheer you, I can perhaps be of other help to you."

"Good, Walford," he said quietly, "it's a comfort to have you. See, I bought two tickets to Bainbridge, on the fair odds of your sticking to me."

It was true that I hardly knew Ormiston Phyfe. I had met him only once, on one of his rare visits to the city. Yet even then I had fallen under the spell of his winsome, yet manly, personality. I could well understand the hold he had on the affections of Fenway, who every spring for many years had fished and swapped yarns with him in the northern woods.

I led Fenway to talk about him, in order to complete my mental picture of my friend's friend. Phyfe, although past fifty, had never married. He was well-to-do-rich, according to the standards of the central New York village, where he lived in the fine old mansion in which he had been born. The rest of his household consisted of a niece, Miss Edith Vance, and his secretary, Thomas Sayre.

A college graduate, a man of culture, and widely traveled, Ormiston Phyfe, nevertheless, was content to spend his days in quiet Bainbridge—his only business, the care of his property and of one or two estates.

Such was the man whose house we approached the next afternoon. As we stepped upon the porch, a maid, evidently on watch, opened the front door and whispered that there had been no change in Mr. Phyfe's condition since his sudden turn for the worse the day before. Fenway looked significantly at me as he received this information, and asked if he could see Miss Vance.

As if in answer to his inquiry, a slender, graceful girl, of about twenty years, came into the hall from a room on the right. She was slightly above medium height, with dark, almost black, hair and eyes. I thought her pretty, as she first appeared, pale and sad, to my view; but when, on recognizing Fenway, her face lighted up in welcome, bringing a wave of color to her cheeks, I saw that she was more than pretty.

"I'm so glad you've come!" she exclaimed, after Fenway had introduced me and she had drawn us into the library, from which she had just stepped. "Uncle has asked several times during the last twenty-four hours if we had heard from you; but he refused to let us send for you. He will want to see you, I know; and I think you had better come to his room at once. He—he is failing fast, and I am afraid it is only a matter of hours now." Her voice faltered. "He knew from the first that his illness was a fatal one; but his wonderful vitality until yesterday, his cheerfulness, even gaiety, made it impossible for us to believe we were to lose him."

Her tears could not be checked; and Fenway led her from the room in fatherly attitude, his hand upon her shoulder. Six hours later he came down alone.

I did not need the spoken word to tell me that all was over. Ensconced, unnoticed, in the darkened library, I had been aware of the quiet agitation, the subdued excitement of the household, the summoning of physicians and others, their arrival, the tiptoed footfalls of attendants upon the stairs and in the hall, of a bitter, harrowing, shrill cry from the room above me.

Fenway, on entering the room, had grasped my hand and drawn me down beside him on the sofa. So we sat together in unvoiced sympathy for a space not to be measured in years or minutes. All I realized was that a young man, tall, slim, fair-haired, desolate of mien, had passed through the library silently, wringing his hands, and so out through another door into the office addition beyond. Again, I seemed to know, before

Fenway spoke, that the specterlike being was Thomas Sayre, the secretary.

"Poor fellow," said Fenway. "I am sorry for him. He has lost his best friend, and at a time when he needs one most, I fancy. It is not only grief that breaks him down. He is, I fear, in the shadow of a great trouble. More than that, he is in love."

I had seen Edith Vance, so I did not have to ask with whom. "She does not—" I began.

Fenway shook his head, and led the way into the hall.

"Mr. Grant, this is my friend, Mr. Walford," he said, introducing me to an athletic-looking young man who stood there. "My fellow executor," Fenway added for my information. "I am glad to have so capable an associate. He agrees to assume the entire responsibility, as soon as may be, for what would have been to me the most serious part of the trusteeship. He marries Miss Vance."

Grant colored slightly. Under the circumstances, I contented myself with pressing his hand. I liked his looks, and felt that Edith Vance would be well cared for.

As we left the house and walked over to the hotel, Fenway told me that Marcus Grant was a lawyer, who had succeeded, on the death of his father, a year before, to an excellent practise. Phyne had been fond of him, and had trusted greatly to his judgment.

"I wish," said Fenway, "that Ormiston had not named me as an executor. But for his personal desire that I should serve, expressed to me on his deathbed, I should have declined. Fortunately, with Grant as my associate, my duties will be merely nominal. I judged from what my friend said before he passed away that practically everything goes to his niece, who will marry Grant with her uncle's full approval. His great regret was that he died before they were made one. A brave girl. She bears up nobly—".

"Yet the blow struck her cruelly," I ventured. "I heard her spirit cry out as his took flight."

"It struck her. She bent beneath it,"

said Fenway, "but she was dumb. The cry was Sayre's."

I looked my surprise.

"Not like a man's way of taking it. He has a feminine streak in him, and it came out under stress. It was pitiful to see him, painful to hear him. He is shattered—a wreck—incapable of attending to anything. Grant and I and Edith will make all arrangements. There will be many ways in which you can help us," he added, anticipating the eager offer that my lips had not time to form.

All the details of the funeral were quickly settled at a conference the next morning. The sexton of the Episcopal church informed me that the signature of Miss Vance, the next of kin, was necessary to open the Phyne vault in the churchyard.

"It is, however, full," he declared. "There have been many deaths in the family. Miss Vance alone survives. There were originally niches for twelve caskets. All are occupied. Shall a grave be opened? Or the casket could be placed on trestles in the passage pending an enlargement of the vault," he suggested.

Miss Vance was surprised, and thought that the sexton must be in error. There was still room for one name on the memorial tablet, she asserted. The sexton remembered that such was the case. It seemed a puzzle to him; for his memory was equally sure that if there were only eleven names inscribed, there were, nevertheless, twelve bodies interred.

"It's a question easily answered," said Fenway, "and quickly. We are not ten minutes' walk from the church, Walford, you and I will accompany Mr. Pinkham there and solve the riddle."

Both Mr. Pinkham and Edith were right. There was record of only eleven names; but there were twelve bodies in the vault. So the riddle was still to be solved. It was gruesome work taking account of stock—such it horribly seemed to be—of the defunct Phynes, but it was soon accomplished. When the tally was complete, there was still

a coffin over, unaccounted for, and it failed to account for itself. Its severely plain silver plate bore only the baffling inscription: "M. S. P. Aug. 29, 1884."

Who was M. S. P.? The sexton could not reply. His records, taken over from his predecessor, did not reveal the answer. On returning to the house, Edith could throw no light on the subject. The mysterious M. S. P. had died four years before she was born.

Sayre was appealed to. We found him stretched out prone upon a lounge in the office, where he had apparently spent the night, his face in his arms. While seemingly in half a daze, he shook himself together sufficiently to understand our questions and to answer them. He said that while he had access to all his employer's papers and correspondence, there was much with which he was not familiar. Mr. Phyne had never referred in his hearing to the bodies in the vault, nor was Sayre able to recall ever having come across any reference to the vault or its contents, excepting the annual payments made for care and maintenance.

Accordingly, further inquiry was postponed until after the funeral, temporary accommodations being provided for Ormiston Phyne's coffin until it could be learned whether or no the unrecorded box had a prior right to the last niche.

I was curious to know more about the strange youth, who seemed, despite his lack of years, to have occupied so confidential a relation to Phyne, and to have been so terribly unmanned by his death. Grant was able to enlighten me. Sayre, he said, was a foundling who had attracted Phyne's attention while on a visit to an institution about twelve years before. The boy was at that time fully twelve years old, so that he was now twenty-four, although he looked younger. Phyne had brought Sayre home, had sent the lad to school and provided for him, but had never adopted him.

At first, he acted as a sort of office-boy, and took his meals in the kitchen.

Later, as he excelled in school and made himself more and more useful in the office, he was promoted to a salary and to a seat at his employer's table. On the death of Phyne's old clerk, six years ago, Sayre had been competent to take his place, and had held it ever since.

"I remember him well when he first came to Bainbridge," said Grant. "He was a beautiful boy, with sad, melancholy eyes, and a nervous, half-frightened way with him. He was bright at his lessons, and, while not physically brave, he was one of the most persistent lads I ever encountered for getting his own way. He has been devoted to Mr. Phyne and to his interests; yet I fancy—indeed, I know—that Mr. Phyne was greatly disappointed in his protégé. The curious thing is—and Mr. Phyne has even spoken of it to me—that the disappointment seemed to be mutual. He said he often had an uncomfortable feeling that Sayre was expecting more from him than he felt able to give.

"The trouble was, I imagine," Grant continued, "that the two were absolutely unsympathetic in character. Mr. Phyne in the beginning felt sorry for the sad-eyed child, and believed that it would be a charity to cheer him up. He never succeeded in doing so. Mr. Phyne's jokes seemed to rebound from Sayre's back like hailstones. He was practically impervious to humor. You can imagine what a wet blanket it must have been for Mr. Phyne to confront that solemn, dreamy, expectant face three times a day at meals.

"Yet, as I have said, there was never any complaint to be made about the way he did his work. Of late, he took a great deal of responsibility from Mr. Phyne's shoulders, represented him on various directorates, the electric light and power company and the water company, for instance, and not as a dummy, either. Mr. Phyne transferred goodly sized blocks of stock to him, and my impression is that Sayre fairly earned them."

The funeral services filled the church to overflowing. Ormiston Phyne was a man greatly beloved. After his body

had been laid in the vault, Miss Vance, Grant, Sayre, Fenway, the clergyman, Phyfe's attending physician, and I returned to the house, at Miss Vance's request, to listen to the reading of the will.

We assembled in the library, and Grant and Sayre went into the office to get the document from the safe. The will was in an envelope, closed with three seals, and indorsed in typewriting at one end: "Last Will and Testament of Ormiston Phyfe." Grant handed the envelope to Edith.

"Will you read it, Tom?" she asked; but Sayre shook his head and motioned to Grant, who opened the envelope with his penknife and took out the will. It was short, filling only two and a half pages of a double sheet of legal cap, in a gray paper cover, and was in typewriting.

As Grant unfolded the document, his eye ran down the first page. He paled, looked at Edith and then at Sayre, cleared his throat, rose, and walked over to the window, as if to get a better light. I observed that he took advantage of the delay to glance over the second page.

"Mr. Fenway," he said, "I think, with Edith's permission, I shall have to ask you—" He passed the document to my friend, and went over and sat by Edith Vance, taking her hand in his own.

Fenway, in his turn, crossed to the window and examined the will carefully and deliberately, holding it up to the light, and even stopping to study parts of it with a pocket magnifying-glass. At last, addressing the wondering and now worried little audience, he said:

"Before I read this, I think it would be well to make sure that it is indeed the last will of my friend. It is dated three years ago. Mr. Sayre, are you aware of Mr. Phyfe's having made a later will than this?"

"Not to my knowledge," replied Sayre, looking up with an expression of pained astonishment at the question. "This one was where he said we should find it." He looked at Grant, who nodded affirmatively. "I think—I am

almost sure," he continued, "that I should have known if he had made a later will. He was two or three days working over this one, writing it out in long hand, and then copying it on the typewriter. It took him two days, at least, and he kept it under lock and key until it was finished."

"Are you acquainted with its contents?"

Sayre's pale face flushed. "I did not enjoy Mr. Phyfe's confidence to that extent," he replied, "but consciously or unconsciously, he dropped me a hint as to what might be considered an omission. If your hesitation to read the will is due to a feeling of consideration for me, I beg that you will proceed. From the fact that Mr. Phyfe asked me to witness the will, I am aware that my name is not mentioned in it."

Grant's face was a study while Sayre was speaking—surprise, bewilderment, incredulity, scorn seemed struggling for the supremacy. Fenway preserved his mask of schooled imperturbability. Glancing at the third page of the will, he said:

"You do not appear to have witnessed Mr. Phyfe's signature, however."

"No," said Sayre; "an injury to my hand. It was in a bandage; so he sent me for Doctor Fellowes and the Reverend Doctor Webster. Doctor Fellowes was out, so I stopped for Mr. Sukely, the apothecary. Doctor Webster may remember."

"I remember Mr. Sukely signing, and that Thomas had his hand wrapped in a handkerchief," said the clergyman. "But should we not hear the will and postpone this inquisition until afterward?"

Fenway yielded to the wishes of the clergyman; and, without more ado, began.

In brief, the will, after providing for legacies to various educational, charitable, and public enterprises, and to servants, left everything else of which the testator was possessed to "my only son, Thomas Sayre Phyfe, commonly known as Thomas Sayre, by my deceased wife, Mary Sayre Phyfe!"

A bomb exploding in the room could not have caused greater consternation. It was the acme of the unexpected. Not unnaturally, Sayre was the one who showed the most excitement. Springing to his feet and clutching at his collar, as if for more room to breathe, he cried:

"My mother! The twelfth coffin! M. S. P. August 29, 1884! Justice at last!" And he tumbled forward on his face at the feet of Edith Vance.

Fenway, with a look and upraised hand, arrested Doctor Fellowes in the act of jumping to the succor of the prostrate man.

"Wait!" he commanded. "The next paragraph recommends Miss Vance to the care of the residuary legatee, and suggests that their marriage will solve the problem of enabling the testator to right his son without wronging his niece. The rest of it deals with the appointment of executors and administrators. The signatures follow. They are unquestionably genuine."

"Impossible!" cried Grant.

"Examine them," said Fenway. "Doctor Webster will not deny his, written with his own fountain pen. We'll all agree to Ormiston's. Sukely is within call."

"But, my dear sir," exclaimed the trembling minister, "who that knew my friend, Ormiston Phyfe, could believe—"

"None of *us*, at least," said Fenway incisively; "but *he* could," touching the still unconscious Sayre with his boot. "Now, doctor," he continued, addressing the physician, "try to bring him to his senses, if you can. For, until he regains them and disbelieves and repudiates this fanciful rigmarole, it must, nevertheless, stand as the last will and testament of Ormiston Phyfe, past all power of breaking."

II.

The task which Fenway had nominally assigned to Doctor Fellowes was, of course, in so far as it involved bringing Sayre to his senses rather than to mere sensibility, the one which naturally fell upon himself.

From his enigmatical remark about the will, I knew that Fenway had instantaneously framed a theory, and that the theory accurately fitted the facts so far as they were known to him.

What the theory was, how he had arrived at it, and by what means he hoped to prove it, were beyond my comprehension. There was little opportunity at the moment to puzzle over his Delphic utterance. The physician's efforts to resuscitate Sayre engaged our attention and demanded our assistance. The seizure partook of the nature of a rush of blood to the head—more serious than a simple swoon—suggesting apoplexy. Restoration to consciousness found the patient weak and shaken.

He professed the utmost astonishment at the revelations of the will; attributed his attack to the shock of the announcement, coupled with the corroborating evidence of the twelfth coffin; and asked to have the will read to him again in its entirety. Fenway complied with his request, observing as he finished:

"You don't believe that you're his son, do you?"

The look of surprise which came into Sayre's eyes at this blunt question was illuminatingly different from the expression which they had worn just before his collapse.

"Believe it?" he exclaimed. "I must believe it, since Ormiston Phyfe has written it."

"I don't see why," said Fenway, "since it makes him out a liar."

"It makes him out the revealer of a long-concealed but long-suspected truth," protested Sayre.

"Suspected? Then only by you," declared Fenway. "And if you suspected, why were you so overcome by the announcement?"

"Because, since he asked me to witness his will three years ago, I had abandoned all hope of ever hearing the announcement made."

"Mr. Sayre," persisted Fenway, "you have known Ormiston Phyfe twelve years. Others here present have known him longer. They find themselves entirely unable to reconcile what

has just been read to them with their knowledge of the life and character of their friend, or with his known wishes concerning his niece's marriage and the disposition of his property, confirmed by words spoken on his death-bed. You heard those words. How can you explain—”

“Why should I explain?” interrupted Sayre petulantly. “I am no psychologist. I can only accept what I feel, what I know to be the truth. I don't assume to judge my father. Doubtless he had, or imagined he had, adequate reasons for allowing his son to grow up in a false position, under a cloud. If I can be so charitable, why can't you? Why seek to keep me longer from my rightful name, from the woman I love, and from the fortune he intended us to share?”

Sayre's voice, under the stress of his excitement, had risen to a shrill pitch, which recalled to my mind the hysterical scream that had come from the death-chamber. Doctor Fellowes at once intervened, and placed a ban on further discussion, ordering bed and complete quiet for Sayre, who had to be assisted to his room.

The physician was interested to learn the meaning of Sayre's references to the twelfth coffin; and upon being told, announced that he thought he might be able to throw some light on the identity of its occupant after referring to his records. Fenway, accordingly, accompanied him to his office.

This was only the beginning of a systematic series of investigations carried on by my friend, who was as tireless in his quest as he was uncommunicative as to its progress. Each day he had a short interview with Sayre; but Doctor Fellowes, finding his patient in a highly agitated state after one of these visits, informed Fenway that they would have to cease for the present.

“May I see him just once more, for the last time, in about a week?” asked my friend.

“In a week? Oh, I should say so, if all goes well,” replied the physician.

Thus encouraged, Fenway departed. His one injunction upon those left be-

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hind was to keep a constant watch upon Sayre, to allow him to destroy nothing of which he might obtain possession, and to prevent him from entering the office.

Have you ever watched a man who seemed not only incapable of moving, but not to desire to move—watched him from sixteen to twenty hours a day for a week? If you have not, do not dare to blame me when I confess that after midnight of the seventh day I suddenly became aware that the bed, at which I supposed I had not ceased to look, was empty! The window-blinds were closed; so the patient must have walked by me—out through the door! I hurried down-stairs—into the library. The door into the office was open; so was the door of the safe; papers scattered around. I rushed upstairs to give the alarm, awakening Miss Vance. She quickly appeared, and accompanied me to Sayre's room. He was lying in bed, apparently asleep, although tossing a little more restlessly than usual.

“How did he do it? How could I have missed him?” I gasped.

“The back stairs,” suggested Miss Vance.

I ran to look. One of Sayre's bedroom-slippers, dropped in his hurried passage, proved that her theory was correct. The next morning Fenway arrived with a strangely assorted retinue of persons picked up on his travels, and claimed from Doctor Fellowes the fulfilment of the latter's promise that he should have a last interview with Sayre. The physician, fresh from his patient's bedside, shook his head.

“Brain fever,” he briefly explained, in reply to Fenway's eagerly inquiring look.

“That's bad,” was Fenway's quiet comment. “But remember, he is not to die. You understand, doctor; you are not to let him die. All my efforts to clear the character of our dear Ormiston, and to restore Edith to her inheritance, will be futile unless I can confront Sayre with the evidence I have gathered. I have done my part. You must do yours. Don't let him die!”

No doubt Fellowes did his best. He called eminent specialists from distant cities, who approved of his treatment. It was unavailing. I felt myself to blame, deserving of the death of the sentinel who sleeps upon his post. But when death came, after days of anxious watching and waiting, it came not to me, but to Thomas Sayre—Thomas Sayre Phyne, according to the will of Ormiston Phyne, which must now be offered for probate.

Fenway made no attempt to hide his chagrin. He requested all who had been present at the reading of the will, three weeks before, to meet him in the library.

"The grief that I feel to-day, in making a confession of failure," he began, when we were reassembled, "is due solely to the effect that the miscarriage of my efforts will have upon others. And I think it only fair to you and only just to myself that I should relate to you exactly what I have done since we last met in this room; because my investigations have entirely sustained my theory in regard to the will of Ormiston Phyne."

"On its face, the will set up an impossible situation—impossible, that is, to any one who knew the man. It was equally impossible that Phyne should have filled his will with a tissue of lies reflecting on his own character. There was, accordingly, only one conclusion possible. The document was not Ormiston Phyne's last will and testament, although indubitably signed by him and by Doctor Webster and Mr. Sukely as witnesses.

"The only possible inference from this apparent paradox was that the original will had undergone a transformation, unknown to Phyne, indeed after his death. This, to an expert in such matters, at once robbed the case of any suggestion of mystery, excepting in so far as the presence of the twelfth coffin in the family vault was concerned. There was only one possible way in which the transformation could have been effected, and the perpetrator stood revealed in the person benefited.

"What the case lacked in mystery,

however," Fenway continued, "it more than made up in difficulty. Even my cursory examination of the will showed me that its transformation had been so cleverly accomplished that, in itself, it presented no evidence of unauthenticity. Knowing that it must have been changed, I could show where it could have been changed, but could present no tangible proof that it had been changed.

"Even if I had thought it possible to break the will, I was determined not to allow it to be offered for probate, if I could in any honorable way prevent it. Merely to make the contents public would involve the memory of my friend in an unpleasant scandal, utterly without foundation, which a legal contest would serve to emphasize, no matter what the outcome. The only course left open to me, accordingly, was to try to obtain a confession from Thomas Sayre. This I could only hope to do by convincing him that he was not the person he believed himself to be, and perhaps even then only by working on his fears through threats which I might be unable to carry out.

"When I spoke with Sayre next day, I could see that he had been in some degree influenced by what I had said. He was willing to compromise. He told me that he did not wish to coerce Edith into marrying him, and desired to divide the inheritance with her equally. I replied that this offer indicated that he detected one flaw in the will; I would show him a greater one. Thereupon I made known to him what I had learned from Doctor Fellowes, that on August 29, 1884, the doctor had signed a death-certificate for Mary S. Pettigrew, wife of Nathaniel Pettigrew, who had died in giving birth to a son. The Pettigrews at that time had only recently arrived in the village, and were boarding at the hotel.

"The quickness with which Sayre countered on me was evidence of his familiarity with this forgotten page of local history. The name Pettigrew, he argued, proved nothing. Where secrecy was so desirable, a pseudonym would have been adopted. Pettigrew,

the supposed husband, might have been a dummy, an agent, perhaps the dead woman's brother. What had become of him? No one knew. What had become of the dead woman? She had been for twenty-four years in the Phyfe vault. Who had paid for the physician's services? Ormiston Phyfe. Who had settled with the undertaker? Ormiston Phyfe.

"The last two assertions were news to me, and I brought the interview to a close in order to investigate their truth. In confirming it, I learned some other things that did not discourage me from hoping for ultimate success.

"I think," said Fenway, "that we are now in a position to understand, and so to pity, even more than we condemn, this dead, deluded youth. Foundlings are noted for cherishing extravagant ideas about their birth and parentage. Thomas Sayre was a foundling, and of a nature more than ordinarily romantic. He was also ambitious.

"As time went on, and he had access to the files and correspondence in his employer's safe, can we not easily picture him ransacking those ancient papers for corroborative evidence? He finds some forgotten memoranda relating to the Pettigrew coffin and to certain payments made by Ormiston Phyfe. He makes such other quiet investigations as he can without arousing suspicion. According to the dates, he might well be the son born to the mysterious M. S. P. and left by the assumed Pettigrew in an institution, later to be taken therefrom by Phyfe. He at once accepts this as proof that Phyfe is, indeed, his father."

"What was the actual basis of this interesting fiction?" asked Fenway, and proceeded to answer his own question.

"A box in one of Ormiston Phyfe's bureau drawers furnished the clue. It contained a bundle of love-letters written by him to a Miss Mary Somes, of Rochester, in 1882 and 1883. With them were his copies of her letters to him. This correspondence, the existence of which was unknown to Thomas Sayre, contained the real romance of Ormiston Phyfe's life.

"He and Mary Somes met at Saratoga in 1882. They corresponded, and later became engaged, although no announcement was ever made. In 1883 Miss Somes, again at Saratoga, appears to have yielded to a sudden infatuation for a handsome adventurer named Pettigrew and to have eloped with him. Her last letter to Ormiston announced this marriage, and asked for a return of her letters. Thus Pettigrew was undoubtedly aware of the engagement, and of the depth of his defeated rival's feelings.

"That is undoubtedly why we find the Pettigrews, apparently penniless, appearing in Bainbridge a year later at the approach of a domestic crisis. Posing as friends of Ormiston Phyfe, they could enjoy the best that the town afforded, and on unlimited credit.

"When Mrs. Pettigrew died, the burial service was read in the hotel bedroom by the Presbyterian minister. This I learned from the sexton of the Presbyterian church. He also told me that when he demanded of Pettigrew the money for opening a grave, the latter had obtained permission from Ormiston to leave his wife's body temporarily in the Phyfe vault. The next day he vanished from town with his new-born child. Mr. Phyfe had eventually paid the funeral expenses, and, the sexton understood, had settled all the Pettigrews' outstanding accounts in the village, including their hotel bill.

"I laid these discoveries before Sayre, and showed him that even if he were the son of Mary Somes—not Sayre—Pettigrew, he could have no claim on Ormiston Phyfe, since the Pettigrews had been married for more than a year at the time of their child's birth. Sayre became excited, and Doctor Fellowes put a stop to our conferences. Thus I was unsuccessful in my efforts to obtain from Sayre the confession which I think he would ultimately have yielded.

"Let us, however," said Fenway, "return to our consideration of how Sayre's discoveries, without these simple explanations, affected his already morbid imagination. We can compre-

hend how he would have brooded over the mystery of his birth, over Phyne's neglect of him in childhood, over the later failure to acknowledge him, over his anomalous, semidependent position in the household. 'Ah, well,' perhaps he consoled himself, 'maybe my father will do me justice when he dies.' Then, like a thunder-clap, came Phyne's request to his clerk to witness his will. Sayre knew enough law to be aware that this was notice to him that he was not even mentioned in the document.

"Why was this? You may well ask; and, indeed, such an omission must, at first thought, strike us as peculiar. Yet, as we know that Ormiston, before he died, made ample provision for Sayre, and in ways that testified to his confidence in his assistant, a plausible explanation would be that he had arrived at some sort of notion of the suspicion lurking in the youth's head, and had thought thus summarily to dispel it. If this was Ormiston's idea—and it is a safe guess that such it was—he plainly failed to estimate the hold that Sayre's delusion had taken upon him.

"Whether or not Sayre then and there evolved the plot he later carried out, he was, at least, alert to avoid making himself contributory to his own disinheritance. It is fair enough to assume that the injury to his hand was purely imaginary.

"At any rate, we may be sure that he wasted little time in examining the will after it was executed. He could do this easily, since he had access to the safe, and without detection, since the document was simply sealed in an ordinary oblong buff envelope, with a typewritten indorsement, precisely similar to this one." Fenway produced from his pocket the envelope from which Grant had taken the will on the day of the funeral.

"It is possible," he continued, "that the scheme for altering the will did not come to Sayre until after he perceived how readily it could be done, and how difficult, how almost, if not quite, impossible, it would be to prove that it had been done." Fenway took the will

from the envelope, and asked us to examine it in turn.

"You will observe," he said, "that all that relates to the bequests is contained on the first two pages, one backing the other. Only one paragraph, that relating to the executors, is on the third page, and this is followed by the signatures. What the first sheet of the document originally contained it is impossible accurately to say, but it is probable that the miscellaneous bequests were as herein specified, and that the bulk of the property went to Edith Vance.

"It is possible, however, accurately to reconstruct Sayre's procedure. He made a copy of pages one and two, and returned the original will to the safe, placing it in another buff envelope, and sealing and indorsing it as before. Then, as quickly as possible, he composed the wording of the pages now before you, so as exactly to fill the same space. Now, taking a half-sheet of legal cap, exactly similar to that used by Ormiston, he copied thereon his version of the will, using the office typewriter. This half-sheet he filed away among his private papers. So long as Ormiston Phyne was alive, and might at any time take the notion to refer to his will, it was impossible for Sayre to make the substitution. Walford and I saw him pass from the bedside of his benefactor, through the library, into the office, to complete his crime. Although I was not present, and had no suspicion at the time what the young man's evident great trouble was, I can tell you what he did that night.

"He took the will from the safe and from its envelope. He carefully tore the double sheet in two at the top fold; but not so carefully, since his hands trembled, as not to leave a slight unevenness. Retaining of the original will the second leaf, containing the actual signatures, he substituted for the original first leaf the one which you are now looking at, fastened them together in a gray cover with two McGill fasteners, and sealed the reconstructed document in an oblong buff envelope. Both the cover and the envelope, with their

respective typewritten indorsements, he had had the forethought to prepare at the time he forged this will, so that neither the age of the paper, nor the idiosyncrasies of the typewriting, nor the appearance of the ink, in any part of the document, should arouse suspicion or confirm it.

"Whether he destroyed the leaf of the original will or concealed it, who can say? The natural impulse would be to destroy it, but difficulties may have presented themselves, and, besides, criminals are abnormal beings and subject to strange freaks and inconsistencies of conduct.

"By the time that Ormiston Phife actually died, however, Sayre found himself confronted with an unforeseen complication. Marcus Grant had appeared upon the scene as Edith's suitor, and they had become engaged with Ormiston's consent. It was too late for Sayre to make a corresponding alteration in the forged pages of the will without betraying the forgery. This undoubtedly worried him not a little.

"The great passion of his life was to establish his right and title to a name—Phife's name. Even his love for his sweetheart came second; his desire for wealth third. To gain his first great aim he was willing to sacrifice the others. This willingness to compromise betrayed a sense of weakness, and gave me the opening I needed. It encouraged me to hope that, if I could show Sayre that he was not Phife's son, I could induce him to confess on the promise of immunity from prosecution."

"Pardon me," interrupted Doctor Webster. "You have already, more than once, alluded to the necessity of securing a confession from Thomas. I can see its importance, of course. It is most unfortunate that this false will, with its lying statements, must be offered for probate; but surely, with the evidence which you have gathered to prove that Thomas was not Ormiston's son, it will be possible to break it?"

"A will can only be broken," Fenway explained, "by proving either the incompetence of the testator or undue

influence or fraud on the part of others. Ormiston Phife was perfectly competent to make a will. No one will suppose that he could have been unduly influenced by a boy like Thomas Sayre. To establish fraud demands more than evidence that it was possible to commit it. The fact that Thomas Sayre was not Ormiston's son as therein described would not invalidate the will nor affect the bequests. The courts have held that so long as it is perfectly clear whom the testator means to benefit, any error in the statement of the degree of kinship is immaterial.

"Now," Fenway continued, "since Sayre inherits under the will whether he is Ormiston's son or not, what effect would his death have upon the disposition of the property?"

"Why, will it not go to Edith?" asked Doctor Fellowes. "Surely she is next of kin."

"Next of kin to Ormiston, certainly, and has been for years; but not to Thomas, and never has been," Fenway explained. "Of course, if Thomas were Ormiston's son, and if he died intestate, the estate would go to Edith. It would only be necessary for us to offer the will for probate and to make no contest. Ormiston's character would be blackened, but Edith would get her money as soon as Thomas' estate could be administered. Granting, however, that Edith was willing to accept the legacy upon such conditions, or that the rest of us were willing to consent to her doing so, I have gone too far in my investigations to permit the adoption of such a course."

"I have here, in this town, witnesses who are able to testify that Thomas Sayre not only was not the son of Ormiston Phife, but that he was not even the son of Nathaniel and Mary Pettigrew. What is more, I have discovered and can prove whose son he really was."

"It appears that in 1906 Ormiston either learned or suspected, in some way which I have not ascertained, that the Pettigrew child had been left in an orphan-asylum at Syracuse. At any rate, the lady who was the matron of

the institution at that time, and who is now in Bainbridge as my guest, remembers his arrival at the institution and the direction of his inquiries. She was able to inform him that the boy had been adopted several years before by a childless couple in good circumstances and was well cared for.

"While at the asylum, however, Ormiston was attracted by a handsome, light-haired boy of about the same age as young Pettigrew. Childless himself, it seems as if Ormiston had gone to Syracuse with the intention of adopting the child of the only woman he had loved. Defeated in this romantic intention, he was evidently so far committed to the notion as to be willing to accept a substitute. He arranged to have the light-haired lad indentured to him. The boy's name was Thomas Sayre, and he was the son of a man serving a life sentence at Auburn Prison for an atrocious crime. It was doubtless on this account that Ormiston never enlightened Thomas in regard to his parentage.

"Two years ago, every one in any way associated with his prosecution and conviction having died, this man, Jacob Sayre, succeeded in arousing the morbid sympathies of some hysterical women in his behalf, and through their interest and influence he was able to procure a pardon and was set free. Most of his time since then has been spent in the workhouse. At present this amiable gentleman is staying at the Bainbridge Inn at my expense. You will understand, then, that unless Thomas Sayre otherwise disposed of his estate by will, his father, Jacob Sayre, his next of kin, this beast, this felon, this jailbird, will inherit the fortune which Ormiston Phyfe intended should go to Edith Vance."

"But Tom did leave a will!" exclaimed Edith. "See! I found this tucked behind the mattress." She held up a crumpled envelope. "I think he must have gone to get it the night he slipped out of bed and went down into the office and opened the safe." She gave the envelope to Fenway. It was

closed, and bore the inscription roughly scribbled in lead-pencil:

E. V. My will. T. S.

A "P" had been written after the "S," but had been partly erased, as if by a moistened thumb.

In silence Fenway opened the envelope. In silence we watched him extract the contents—a half-sheet of legal cap, typewritten on both sides, but, so far as I could see, without signature. Taking from the table the document purporting to be the will of Ormiston Phyfe, Fenway removed the metal fasteners, separated the two typewritten leaves from the cover, and laid the one containing the signatures end for end with the one which he had just received from Edith. Then he beckoned to us all to gather around him.

There could be no doubt that the two half-sheets had originally formed a complete whole sheet. The irregularities of the edges where they had been torn apart matched with exactness. Dying, Thomas Sayre had made the only reparation in his power, by placing in Edith Vance's hands the first two pages of her uncle's true will. In them, she was named as his principal beneficiary.

Fastening the two leaves of the genuine will together by means of the metal fasteners, Fenway gave the document to Grant.

"That," he said, "can go to the surrogate without comment. This"—he lighted a match and set fire to the forged sheet—"we shall all endeavor to forget."

Fenway had won his battle without knowing it. For seven days and nights Sayre had lain in his bed, debating with himself what he ought to do in the light of what Fenway had revealed to him. Then he had yielded, but only at the point of death. Almost his last conscious act had been to provide that Edith Vance should receive her legacy in case he failed to get well.

But what if he had got well?

Fenway maintains that the fight would still have been on.



ON LOVE

By Owen Oliver

IT was ten-thirty on a blazing July morning, a morning so blazing that little white-robed tables were set on the shady terrace of Carlton Hall for any energetic guests who might rise to breakfast. Lady Isabelle Renway imagined that she was the only early riser, but, as she dropped languidly into a basket-chair, her husband sauntered through the French windows of the billiard-room. They raised their eyebrows and then laughed a little.

"Expecting any one, Bill?" he asked. Her friends called her so.

"No." She shrugged her shoulders. "I couldn't rest for the heat. Am I de trop?"

They had been married for six years, and had gone separate ways for five. It was a mere coincidence that both had come to the Carntons; but neither considered the other's presence sufficient reason for going away. There was no avowed breach. They had simply found themselves unable to run in double harness without kicking.

"To show you that you're not de trop, Bill," said his lordship, "allow me to invite myself to breakfast with you."

"Delighted," said her ladyship politely.

He sank into a chair facing hers.

"You're the greatest stranger I know," he observed. "Having a good time?"

"No," she answered rather crossly. "Neither am I," he consoled her.

"I'm sick of all the things we do," she continued; "sickest of all of motor-ing and bridge." These were the staple amusements at the Carntons—unless you reckon flirtation.

"They're a bore," he agreed. "I was thinking of going to Africa—big game, you know—a bit later. It's beastly hot and dirty; but I don't know what else to try."

"Parliament," she suggested.

"Too big a fool," he objected. He was, in fact, rather clever, but he considered brains bad form.

"I should have thought that was a qualification—if you were. You aren't, in fact; neither am I. We're only not specially keen on anything."

"Slackers," he expressed it, with a shrug of his great shoulders.

A footman brought breakfast, and they toyed with it.

"What's hipped you, Dick?" she asked at length. "Dropped much at bridge, or anything?"

"No. Won a bit, I fancy. Haven't reckoned it up. I don't plunge, any more than you do. I don't know why I bet at all, really. I'm no gambler."

"So far as I can see, we're no anything! We do all the things we don't care for because there's nothing else to do! I am sick of it." She tapped with her foot impatiently. "I wish we had been savages and had to work or starve. I wonder what we should have done if we'd been—prehistorics?"

"I'd have had to go hunting for dinner," he reflected.

"And I'd have nagged you if you came home without any. You'll admit that I can nag."

"By Jove, yes! What rows we used to have!"

"And I'd have had to wash up the plates—"

"They didn't have them."

"Then I'd have washed something else."

"They never did."

"Oh, well! I'd have had to do whatever was the prehistoric equivalent of household duties. If I hadn't you'd have beaten me." She laughed, showing her white teeth.

"It would have done you a deal of good, Bill," his lordship observed teasingly.

"I dare say! I should have howled; and you'd have given me a necklace of bear's teeth, or something, to quiet me. And I should have forgotten my troubles like a child with a new toy. Savages *are* children; and children are savages. That's why they're happy. Look! Here are two prehistorics!" She pointed to the walk below and called: "Little boy and girl! Come here!"

A well-set-up boy of eleven and a pretty girl of eight came shyly toward them, holding hands. They were rather untidy; but Lady Isabelle's feminine eye saw that they had been sent out "respectable," and had become otherwise during their excursion.

"Do you like cakes?" she asked. Her voice was naturally pleasant; and it sounded less "ladylike" than usual and more womanly, when she spoke to the children. Her mother, who belonged to a matronly school—now almost extinct—sometimes sighed and said that "children would have made all the difference to Belle."

"Yes, ma'am," the boy answered.

"He likes everything to eat," the girl explained, "'cause he's a boy."

"Feed the boy!" Her ladyship laughed. "Well, eat as many as you can; both of you."

They sat down, and his lordship

passed the tray, and advised them to "tuck in."

"What's your name, old chap?" he inquired. His lordship also liked children.

"Tom Carter, sir," the boy replied. "She's Nora Wood." He nodded at his companion.

"The housekeeper's granddaughter," Lady Isabelle suggested. Society and idleness had not eradicated one of her natural virtues; a kindly interest in those around her. No one was more popular in the servants' hall than her beautiful ladyship.

"Yes," the boy stated, "and I'm the second gardener's son; and we're not supposed to come here, but we thought—I mean I thought—" He paused awkwardly. "It wasn't Nora's fault. She doesn't think."

"The sex doesn't, Tom," said his lordship.

"Nora isn't a sect," the boy denied indignantly.

"Tom fought you was all lazy lie-abeds!" the little girl explained.

"We sit up very late, Tom," his lordship apologized. "You can't burn the candle at both ends."

"You don't want candles in the morning," the boy protested.

"He's only teasing you," her ladyship explained. "We are very lazy. You are quite right. Now, tell me about Nora and yourself. Is she any relation to you?"

"Yes." The boy drew himself up. "She's my sweetheart!"

"A very nice relationship!" Lady Isabelle laughed. She had a pretty laugh.

"What's your name?" the little girl wanted to know.

"My name is Isabelle Renway. That is Lord Renway. His other name is Richard."

"Is he a relation?" the boy inquired.

"Oh, no! He's only my husband!"

"Is he a good one?"

"Um-m-m! What do good husbands do?"

"Bring all their money home on Saturday; and not go to the Blue Boar!"

His lordship buried himself behind his paper to hide his amusement.

"He never goes to the Blue Boar," her ladyship declared, "and he gives me a good share of his money. So I suppose that he should be considered a good husband."

"Where do you live?"

"I live in a lot of places; sometimes in London. Do you know where that is?"

"Where Cousin Arthur went," the little girl said.

"People live in ever so many places," the boy observed. "We live in Carnton; and grandad and granny live at Woodend; and Nora's uncle went to Heaven, and Mr. Green to South Africa; and Aunt Mary is in Rustlebury; and Uncle Fred and Aunt Nellie are in Love!"

"In love!" Her ladyship smiled suddenly; and his lordship, glancing over his paper, reflected that "Old Bill" was always a deuced pretty woman. "Do they like it?"

"They seem to," the boy stated. "They say they wouldn't change with anybody. So I expect it's awfully nice there. Have you ever been?"

"I was there for a visit," Lady Isabelle said. "It is rather—rather a place for visitors!" She glanced at her husband, and he occupied himself by lighting a cigarette.

"Did *he* go, too?"

"Did *you*?" her ladyship asked him.

"Ripping place!" said his lordship. He took up the paper again.

"For week-end excursions," her ladyship observed.

"Oh!" said the boy. "I didn't know it was the seaside. Do they have niggers and donkeys?"

"It is *full* of donkeys!" Lady Isabelle laughed suddenly; and her husband chuckled.

"I don't like niggers," Nora remarked, "but I don't mind men who black their faces. Not when Tom takes me."

"I think I shall go to Love some day," Tom observed.

"I hope you will go there some day," her ladyship agreed.

"Me, too," said Nora. "Please, Tom!"

"She cries if I don't take her to places," the boy explained. "I'm going to take her to Mrs. Smith's presently. We've got a penny."

"Tom's got a penny." The girl laughed excitedly.

"What would you do if I gave you a shilling, girlie?" his lordship inquired, patting Nora's curls.

"What would we do, Tom?" she asked.

"Apples and sweets," said Tom laconically.

"And suppose I gave you a shilling, too, Tom?"

Tom considered the matter carefully.

"We'd have apples and sweets between us," he decided, "and a doll for Nora."

Lord Renway handed out the two shillings, and the two children went off hand in hand.

"The primitive savages!" Lady Isabelle observed, with a stifled sigh.

"Sometimes," her husband remarked, "I wonder if civilization isn't a confounded mistake."

He resumed his paper, and Lady Isabelle studied the landscape and the disappearing children.

"I wonder—" she began; and her husband lowered the paper; and then their host and hostess came out with a group of their other guests.

"We can't make up our minds where to motor to-day," the hostess complained. "We seem to have seen everywhere within fifty miles."

"Except Carnton," Lady Isabelle suggested.

"Good idea!" cried some one. "Let's go where we are, instead of where we aren't."

"It's all poky little lanes," their host pointed out. "You'd have to walk."

"Why not?" said the hostess. "There's nothing like a complete change. Let's have a walking-party. Partners as usual!"

"No," Lady Isabelle demurred, "as usual isn't a complete change. We must change partners."

"My dear Bill!" cried the hostess. "You always do! I believe you've rung all the changes."

There was a general laugh. Lady Isabelle looked a trifle annoyed and flushed. Her husband watched her, and twirled his mustache.

"I think," he remarked, "that I should be a complete change. Eh, Bill?"

The Honorable Mrs. Pinch giggled. There was no love lost between her and Lady Isabelle.

"That's a nasty remark!" she observed.

"Or a funny proposal," suggested some one else.

"The remark may be funny," said Lord Renway, "but the proposal is not nasty—speaking merely for myself, of course."

Lady Isabelle smiled quickly.

"Do I understand that it *is* a proposal?" she inquired, with her head on one side.

Lord Renway rose and bowed formally.

"May I have the pleasure of your company upon this walk?" he asked.

Lady Isabelle rose and dropped a graceful curtsey.

"The pleasure will be mine!" she declared.

"I hope it isn't a *serious* row," the host murmured to the hostess. In their set other occasions for a tête-à-tête between husband and wife were rare. "Oh, no," the hostess assured him. "He wouldn't let her be 'sat upon.' That's all. They'll be frightfully polite—and frightfully bored!"

They certainly started politely. Lord Renway was as attentive to his wife as if she had been somebody's else; and Lady Isabelle talked to him as smilingly as if he had been anybody's else husband.

"Thanks, Dick," she said, when they had drifted away from the others. "You must look upon this as an awful bore; but I don't see that we need bore each other. We can always find something to quarrel about." She laughed up at him.

"Need we quarrel?" he asked.

"No," she pronounced. "We needn't. I'm older—a fearful lot older! I'm not nearly such a little spitfire as I used

to be; and perhaps you're not so aggravating. You—oh! We won't have any post-mortems. Let's pretend we're strangers." She put on her company manner. "That's a pretty view, Lord Renway, isn't it? Go on! What do you generally say?"

"Prettiest view I ever saw." He stared straight at her. "That's what they generally say, don't they?"

"For a complete stranger," she suggested, "you're going a bit too fast. You're looking the wrong way, Lord Renway."

"Don't let's tom-fool!" he protested. "Let's be ourselves; rather nicer selves than we've been sometimes, Bill."

"All right! Dick, I'll race you to that gate!"

She ran and he pursued her. They reached the gate side by side. She did not pull up quite soon enough, but he fended her from the gate with his arm. The touch of her sent his pulses a little faster.

"You didn't try to beat me," she declared; "but you don't run like you did. How old are you, Dick?"

"Thirty-three."

"And I'm nearly twenty-eight. Heigh-ho! We live too long nowadays. I suppose the prehistorics died young?"

"Flint arrows and all that sort of thing," he explained. "And martial law."

"The women wouldn't get martial lawed, or flint-arrowed," she objected.

"Clubbed," he stated. "Marital law!"

"If they nagged?" Her eyes sparkled wickedly.

"You bet they did! Besides, there were wild beasts; and they picked out the tenderest."

"Let's be prehistorics," she suggested, "and go and look for lions in that thicket."

"Tear your fal-lals," he warned her.

"Don't care! I'm a primitive savage; and these are skins." She touched her dainty draperies and gathered her skirt with one hand.

"Come on, then. Can you jump this ditch? Brava! Little savage!"

"Big savage! What's your prehistoric name?"

"Mug!" he decided promptly.

"And what shall I be?" She pressed a dimple in her cheek and looked at him. Old Bill would try her fascinations on a rhinoceros, he reflected.

"Mug and Mag?" he proposed.

"You might have said Nag! But I suppose Nag would have been clubbed long ago. You mustn't hold the branches back for me, Mug. Prehistorics scratched themselves—not their husbands."

"Prehistorics had skins of leather, and you haven't. Squeeze through, Billy girl."

He bit his lip when the old name had slipped out; and Lady Isabelle bit hers. Her eyes met his for a moment. Bill was the most outrageous little coquette that ever lived, he warned himself. She wanted to subjugate him; and laugh at him.

"Thank you, Mum," she said. "Oh-h-h! There's a—a wild beast!" She jumped behind him and held his coat. "I'm so frightened of cows! Oh, Dicky boy!"

She blushed at the old name; but he set his teeth. He knew very well that she had said it deliberately; but—Old Bill was a very pretty woman.

He steered her past the cow, with a protecting arm; and glanced at her before he removed it.

"I say, 'Billy—'"

"Don't be silly!" She flushed and drew herself away. She did not expect that he would let her do so, but he did not know that. Man is the dense sex.

"You know jolly well that you tried to make me," he cried angrily. "Well, you can try. You won't succeed again." He set his mouth in a way that she knew.

"What a pity we're not prehistoric," she observed, in a calm little voice—a voice that he knew. "You could club me. I'm going through there—Mug!"

She pushed into a thicket. He followed. Suddenly she gave a cry and held up her arm. A great thorn had cut through the glove, and marked a red line that grew slowly thicker. He pushed himself against the brambles to

keep them from her, turned the glove back, and bound her arm with his handkerchief. She trembled and turned pale. The sight of blood always made her faint, he remembered.

"Feel queer, Billy?" he asked.

She nodded and leaned against him; and he put his arm round her; and suddenly he drew her close.

"I've got you," he cried fiercely, "and I'm d-dashed if I'll let you go!"

"I'm dashed if I want to," gasped Lady Isabelle. "Dicky, dear!"

She flopped her head down on his shoulder; and then she fainted. He pushed through the thicket, holding her in his arms, and sat upon a tree-trunk, still holding her, until she came to.

"Oh, Billy girl!" he cried. "My pretty, naughty, Billy girl!"

She turned her cheek against his shoulder and sighed contentedly.

"Dicky, dear!" she whispered. "It's been so—so lonely."

She cried a little, and he petted her.

"Now we're all right, Billy," he said.

"I don't know." She sighed a real sigh. "It will be awfully hard. I shall nag. I'm sure I shall. And you'll lose your temper. Poor boy! I'm enough to make you! Dick! Let's *try* to agree; try and try and *try!*"

He hugged her close to him.

"We'll have to," he asserted. "I'm going to carry you off somewhere by ourselves, where we can't get away from each other; and if we have rows we'll have to make it up. Where shall we go, Billy girl?"

"To—Love!" She held up her pretty face.

They couldn't find the rendezvous for luncheon; at any rate, they didn't! So they went to a little inn and had bread and cheese; and the time-honored sauce, if truth be told. Then they wandered back down a long shady lane, with their arms round each other, like a pair of rustic lovers, to pack up and run away before the rest of the party came home.

"The prehistoric man always ran off with the prehistoric woman," she told him.

"Prehistoric wives were braver," he teased her, "and tougher! They didn't scratch their leathern skins. Or, if they did, they never fainted."

"Oh!" she retorted, with sparkling eyes. "Most thick-skulled and rightly-named Mug! They weren't half so brave as a poor little modern thin-skinned wife, who knew she'd faint, and scratched her thin skin *most deliberately!*"

Lord Renway took the wounded arm, untied the handkerchief, and looked at the long red weal. Then he took off his hat and kissed the straggling mark. His lips trembled a little.

"So you were always 'in Love,'" he said. "So was I, Billy girl!"

"We'll remember that," she told him, "when I nag and you are aggravating."

That was five years ago, and their friends are curious about the standing joke between them. "Remember where you live, Bill," they have often heard him tell her. "You can't change your residence, Dick!" she is fond of reminding him. When they are asked to explain the "joke" they laugh and shake their heads. They never mean to tell anybody—except two very little people who have come to live with them in that wonderful land which we call Love!



NELLIE'S MAYING

WHEN the early dew was spraying,
Like a fountain, leaves and grass,
Little Nellie went a-Maying—
Oh, the laughing, rosy lass!

Low she hummed, while on she stepped,
Blithe as lark or gipsy straying
Down a path where squirrels leapt—
Head and heart full of her Maying.

In deep glens, lo! night was staying
Till the midday sun might shine;
Ferns there whispered: "Do no Maying
Where the poison-ivies twine!"

Forth in meadows drenched with light
Nellie passed, sometimes delaying,
Only to renew her flight
And achieve her childhood's Maying,

Many a poor, scared flower betraying.
Hark, the wind blew chill and husk!
Yet would Nellie keep a-Maying,
'Neath a sky grown drear and dusk.

Then the stars came—hush!—and twinkled,
Like the lamps of pale nuns praying,
O'er a mound where, pansy-sprinkled,
Nellie still dreams of her Maying.

WILLIAM STRUTHERS.

IN MUSICLAND

By William Armstrong

TIME encysts troubles, as flesh does bullets. Because of that, the telling of this episode is, at last, both permitted and permissible.

For ten years, now, we have known Charles Gilibert as an artist, first of all suave, finished, sincere, conveying a gay sense of humor, and again a penetrating gentleness of the quality that seems almost exclusive property of people physically big.

His diction, the color, the nuance that he gives to the sung word we know, too. In part for these reasons, to get at this narrative with its full import, one should hear it from the singer himself. For the rest, there was in his recital of it the dignity, the bantering gaiety, with which he would give a song, just as sincerity to its mood in turn demanded.

This present story is one of enforced, instant choice between a calling in which the whole life was centered, and homelessness.

To understand the situation preceding, one should know that Gilibert, born in Paris, and at that time just eighteen, was the son of a business man; apprenticed in the shop of a draper friend of his father; that he loathed business, giving in at regular intervals a resig-

nation, which was as regularly not accepted, and that in the "auditors" class at the Conservatoire he spent many hours which could in no sense be called spare ones.

Then came the inevitable.

There was to be a *concours* the next day for students desiring admission to the Conservatoire.

"At night, during supper," said Gilibert, "I told my father of it, and that I would enter the trial examination next day to study for the stage. Not a word did he answer; my father is original. We finished in silence. Then he told me to follow into his office.

"What is this that you tell me?"

"I am going," I answered.

"I give you two hours for reflection," was his reply. "If you persist you will leave the house to-night. I am master here."

"Is that your last word?" I asked.

"The last," he said.

"My mother was living then; I never saw her again until she lay on her death-bed.

"At ten o'clock I left the house; I had a small bag in my hand, ahead of me was carried the little trunk I had used in school holidays.

"We belonged to the bourgeoisie. I had never known the value of money; when I had needed I asked for it. That night I had no money; my mother had been forbidden to help me.

A day later my father published a notice repudiating all debts that I might make.

"I was young; Paris is a good city.

"We lived in the Latin Quarter, and I went to a students' hotel in that section, where I was known. By dawn I was up, night had brought no sleep to me.

"Long before nine I was at the Conservatoire, very happy; it was my first step toward my desire. That day, no longer merely an 'auditor,' I felt myself a full-fledged student.

"But my first meeting with the administration was scarcely joyous. I learned that my name should have been entered three days earlier, to have been a candidate in the *concours*. It was closed to me!

"No home! No work! They must hear me! 'Would they do me the favor,' I asked the secretary, 'only to try my voice without formality?'

"Angry at my insistence, he shouted: 'Leave the room!' adding jeeringly: 'And shut the door after you.'

"That I did not forget; years afterward we settled it.

"On my stumbling way through the court, I met an usher with whom, on earlier visits there, I had sometimes spoken. To him, as the only being left of my old world to confide in, I told what had happened.

"'Poor boy!' he said at the end of it. 'There is only one chance for you; if you know a deputy or the director of either opera, they can get you a hearing.'

"That was a gleam of light. Monsieur Carvalho, of the Opéra Comique, was a friend of my father."

So he presented himself at the Opéra Comique, sending up to Carvalho the name of Monsieur Gilibert.

"But you are not Monsieur Gilibert!" exclaimed Carvalho, who had expected the father.

"I am his son, listen to me," said the boy.

Then he told him everything, his hopes, his decision, his father's anger, and his own present homelessness.

"This is the first time that a young

man has ever dared ask me for the *concours* privilege," commented Carvalho.

"I have lost everything. If I am not received I have nothing to support life," Gilibert interrupted. "I believe I can succeed. Listen to me sing, I beg of you. Then tell me frankly about my voice."

Struck by the boy's desperate earnestness, down to the stage they went together. Rehearsal just ended, the accompanist was still there.

For a moment faintness almost overcame Gilibert; he had eaten nothing since the night before, his legs refused to support him. The theater looked vast in its emptiness; upon the impression that he made the next instant depended his whole life. He sank into a chair. Would they give him a glass of water before he began? The supreme test had come, but how different it was from the way a young singer would have chosen it, weak from hunger, worn out with harrowing troubles and uncertainties. Then he sang his aria from Massenet's "Herodiade" that he had carried about all day. After that, Carvalho sent for "Noches de Jeanette," and had him sing a number from that.

"Come back to my office," was all his judge said when it was ended. But that cheered Gilibert like a burst of sunshine; at least the man was interested.

"It was a solemn moment," said Gilibert in recalling it.

Carvalho, appreciating, perhaps, as well the solemnity of it, was honestly, justly frank; his words showed how keenly he weighed them:

"Monsieur Gilibert, I have the entire conviction that you can earn your living with your voice. With one so young, I cannot tell whether you will be a great artist, but you have the qualities for an honorable career."

Then he handed him a letter to Ambroise Thomas, head of the Conservatoire. "If you are not received," he said at parting, "I will give you a professor. I want to see your father, for I don't think any one could be so cruel."

"To the Conservatoire I returned

with my beloved letter," Gilibert said of that day's further testing, "and the usher begged me in vain to entrust it to him for delivery. His assurance that he had been the one to direct me straight through in the matter made no impression. That letter was all I had in the world, I would give it to none but Ambroise Thomas.

"By this time, his persistence and my excitement increasing, there was no inconsiderable noise in the room. A distinguished, white-haired old gentleman, a decoration in his buttonhole, peered in, crying that the commotion was insupportable. After explanations allowed a brief silence, he himself took the letter. Then came the message that Ambroise Thomas would admit me for a hearing.

"Last in all the long list I reached the trial-room. There sat the jury, Massenet, Delibes, and all the great composers of France. There they had been sitting since nine o'clock in the morning; it was now seven. One hundred and twenty-six candidates had already sung to them; I was the one hundred and twenty-seventh. As I entered I showed my aria from 'Herodiade.' 'You will be the forty-sixth who has sung it to-day,' was remarked. It was a good encouragement!

"As I stepped onto the stage, all were closing their books and folding their papers with bored resignation. At last it was over! Ambroise Thomas caught sight of me; from the start he gave I could tell that until that moment he had quite forgotten me.

"'Yes, yes,' he began, in anxious apology to the jury. 'Gentlemen, allow me but a moment more of your attention. Here is a young man whom Monsieur Carvalho has sent to us. Will you not kindly hear him?'

Their reply was 'With pleasure,' but displeasure, great displeasure, was written all over their faces.

"I had worked very hard on the recitative of my aria; with it I hoped to make an effect.

"One moment before you begin, monsieur! Kindly omit the recitative," came the injunction.

"That was another shock. And then I began the aria.

"There was no longer a consuming anxiety. I had succeeded with Carvalho, I felt that I should succeed there. Hope is another name for youth; I had both. I sang, I sang with all the heart in me.

"Meanwhile, the great men at the table continued to busy themselves with their pencils, their books, and their papers. Ambroise Thomas, when I had finished, talked with Massenet, the composer of the aria I had sung, then he said to me: 'Will you now sing the recitative?'

"Ah, the joy of it! 'Are you a musician?' they asked. I read some music. Frankly speaking, I was a good musician.

"Then I went into the court with the rest to await the decision.

"It was half-past nine at night when the first of the jury, Léo Delibes, good, kind-hearted soul, appeared. All precipitated themselves on him. 'Am I chosen?' 'Am I chosen?' came from the crowd closing about him. 'You will read to-morrow in the morning papers,' was all he answered. I had waited on the outskirts, eager, how desperately eager, to know my fate. Following him timidly, I, too, asked: 'Am I chosen?' He turned, a little impatient by that time, for doubtless he, too, had suffered that day. 'You?' Then he smiled. 'The big fellow!' He patted my shoulder. 'Yes, you are received.'

"After that, there were days of uncertainty, for I had to live somewhere, somehow. Going to old friends of the family, I said: 'I cannot pay the rent. Will you lend me the money? I will repay you in two, three, five years, but surely not now.' Among them was a publisher; he had one room partly filled with old editions. 'Live there,' he said. 'Pay if you can; if not, good.' That was my room for the first year of study.

"A friend of my mother had a piano factory. To him I went to try to make terms for renting an instrument. I had to have it. I sang him some songs.

'Here is a piano,' he told me. 'It is my gift.' But the walls of my room dripped with moisture; at the end of the year the piano was ruined.

"At the close of my first year at the Conservatoire, and considered as an unusual thing, I gained a prize.

"And my mother was dead! She had died of sadness.

"Once there came a knock at the door. I thought it one of my numerous creditors, and opened. There stood my father. 'I have learned that you have worked very hard, and have earned a prize. I forgive you. I will leave you something.' And he put a five hundred franc note on the table.

"'You've nothing to forgive,' was my answer to him. 'When you give me back my mother, I'll forgive you.'

As he recalled this there was a look in Gilibert's face that haunted. Then, with touching, quiet dignity, sincere to every detail of the truth, he added: "I took the money, I needed it very much.

"Somehow I lived until my studies were over. I did not have to work very hard to play my part in the artist's garret in 'Bohème'? No, I was not obliged to search far to understand it.

"But the great joy of being an artist! Of being able to do what one wants to do! It gives one such strength. I am sometimes discouraged; sometimes I make mistakes. I must work more to arrive; it is an exacting life; it is not what many people would look on as pleasure. It is better than that, for it is doing day and night what I love best to do, best of anything in the world."

Riccardo Martin's launching in music had a prologue, spoken at his birthplace, Hopkinsville, Kentucky: "What! Study music? Better take him out into the field and shoot him!"

The gentle thought emanated from his uncle; family ties are the real fount of free speech the world over. The call of the blood is to voice in plain terms depreciation of its own. The plainer the terms, and the stronger the depreciation, the closer the bond of family interest.

Very often no two medicines act identically in parallel cases; discouragement with some is correspondingly opposite in its moral effect upon others. Taking fresh energy from opposition, Martin kept to his determined course. That course had in its pursuit none of the harrowing phases of Gilibert's beginnings, but it had in it quite enough to try the temper of a man's ruggedness, his steeled courage, and of an ability to hold his own opinion for a considerable time, during which none could discern any ground for it.

Very often we may have wondered at the fluttering circlings of birds before they alighted; perhaps their form of search for the exact right spot to alight on. The young Kentucky tenor, to make use of a metaphor once it has been invented, did some circling equally logical, for, though he may have only instinctively realized it, it tended from the first to make a firmer final foundation under him. Musically, he is the best grounded, the most comprehensively equipped among his colleagues at the Metropolitan. His study of the violin and piano, of theory in Germany, and composition and orchestration for four years with MacDowell at Columbia, combined to effect this. All of these branches Martin taught during the years of his stay in New York.

Having written symphonic poems of his own, he understands the supporting orchestra that he sings above; as a pianist, he can study his scores independently, and know, in a way, what to expect when he comes to rehearsal; in intonation, none is truer than the violinist who learns the violin before he learns singing.

In this aspect Martin is an interesting instance of broad development, for, after much musical circling, all tending toward one focal point, the voice came last of all. Throughout, his absorbing assurance was: "I feel that I can sing, I mean to do it, it is in me. How can any one sing unless actuated by that impulse?"

If perseverance is genuine, it can withstand more buffeting than any

psychologist has yet determined. To the mind irrevocably set on one aim, buffeting is what the punching-bag means to an athlete.

In Naples, at San Pietro a'Majella, the oldest conservatory in the world, where Martin sang in German, "Who is Sylvia?" they complimented him on his taste, told him that the quality of his voice was not disagreeable, but too weak for development, and not warranting of study with a private teacher.

In many cases their verdict would have been justifiable; with many vocalists mind is inferior to matter.

Keeping on undisturbed with his voice, on returning to New York, Martin reached one day a point that seemed, even to him, almost the end of things vocally. Doctor Holbrook Curtis examined his throat, pronounced it a superb one, and agreed with Martin's inward belief that he should be a singer. Absolute silence for eight hours was prescribed; then, returning, he was shown how to focus the tone. Seizing the idea, he found the opera quality; immediately the voice began to develop, and he settled down on the final foundation of his long-seeking.

The rest is more in the traditional, biographical style: Sbriglia's verdict in Paris that teaching was a waste of time to him, as his place was on the stage; subsequent aid that sent him to Italy for study; and his successful début in "Faust" at Nantes in 1894.

But the first American tenor to make a crescendo of success at the Metropolitan had an episode more unique in his trying-out process, the night of his Milan début at the Theater Dal Varme. Prior to that he had sung with success at Verona, three times refusing the Milan engagement, because he had two others, in Russia and Portugal, ahead of him.

The Galleria at Milan has among its loungers more singers out of engagements than in them. They league together against any man fortunate

enough to put his name under a contract. Singing foreigners are their abhorrence. Cabals of the kind that unsophisticated Americans think obsolete, are with them continued stories. And why not? Italy possesses more singers with voices too bad to be tolerated outside their own country than any other land can assemble.

On the night of Martin's début there, the Galleria contingent went in a body to hiss him down. "He is stealing the bread from our mouths!" was their motto.

It began in the first act with cries of "basta," whistling, and shouts of derision. The pandemonium kept him waiting in silence on open scene. No voice could carry through it. At last applause from orchestra and boxes half quelled it, but not until the second act was under way. The opening number in the fourth act he sang so well that six recalls started again the opposing disturbance which threatened a riot. Those not singers out of an engagement ended in the ascendant.

At a critical juncture between the acts, the impresario Oreste Poli burst into Martin's dressing-room, expecting to see him collapsed. Instead, seated at a table, he was playing solitaire. "What!" said Poli, his tone almost disappointed. "An Italian would have run from the theater in his stage-clothes."

For four nights policemen were posted in the gallery to eject disturbers. But none disturbed.

While not every good foreign singer in Italy may have had a like solution of such experience, Martin's was that after the voice had made an impression on his audience, hostility was forgotten. At the outset, as the conductor of that night acknowledged, the entire theater personnel, even the scene-shifters, seemed against him. By the time the performance was half over, he had won them as adherents. It no longer mattered then where the man haled from, his voice was welcome.





NEW YORK NIGHT ADVENTURES

BY CAROLINE DUER

III.



HEN one is a little more than middle-aged—at the time of life when all the “sure-to-bes” are changed to the “might-have-beens,” and one accepts each day’s dole with a placence that seems servile—when one is alone, a woman and an invalid, in the heart of a great city, one is pretty sure to become unduly interested in one’s own habits or those of one’s neighbors. So I, sitting for long hours in a big chair, drawn cozily up into the corner of my bay-window, commanding a fine view of the street—right, left, and straight in front—and having no concerns of my own, have become absorbed in those of the people about me. My attention focused itself upon them as soon, almost, as I was settled in the house, and, in spite of occasional setbacks, has continued ever since.

I knew when the children opposite went and came back from school. I liked the old nurse who attended them, and was sure she had descended, an heirloom in the family, from the young days of the children’s little mama. I was familiar with the glancing life of their aquarium in the nursery window, and with the puffy Persian pussy-cat who surreptitiously attempted to fish in it when nobody marked her. I was witness to the brisk exits and entrances of the little papa of the establishment, and hoped he was as prosperous as he looked.

Then, again, I knew that the old gen-

tleman at Number Twelve had broken his leg, slipping up on his own icy pavement, and had to be taken care of—in the third-story front room—by a grim trained nurse, of whose stalwart proportions I distinctly approved; for the old gentleman at Number Twelve was supposed to look sometimes upon the wine when it was red in the cup, and one felt that petticoat government in his case should be of the stiffest sort.

I took an interest in the neat house of the two maiden ladies on the right of him, and craned my neck every time a fashionably appointed carriage stopped before the door of the dress-maker on the left.

I had a decided partiality for the yellow-haired girls at the corner, each of whom was prettier than the others—till you saw them all together—and who did most to keep the street alive with the running up of steps and the ringing of bells as they and their parcels, and their flowers, and, above all, their young men, were forever being admitted.

The misanthrope on the same side of the street with me used to look at them sourly through tortoise-shell rimmed spectacles, down a long, thin, condemnatory nose; but for my part I took pleasure in their happy frivolity, and should have promoted them to be the favorites of my curiosity—which I did not call curiosity to myself—if it had not been for the lady next door.

The lady next door was my pet subject for speculation. She had a bow-window in her house that jutted out as

far as did the one in mine, only hers was a little lower—the house being smaller, and the stories not so high—and I could see her closely when she sat there in the sunshine, just beside me and below me.

Sometimes she wrote letters at a ridiculous little desk that looked as if it would upset if she happened to use too heavy a pen. Sometimes she put a stitch or two into a piece of embroidery, or tore a new and perfectly preposterous hat to bits to pin it together in a newer and more perfectly preposterous way. Sometimes she read for a few minutes at a time. But she was never quiet for long, and if she had not been so pretty, and light, and quick in her motions—so that she seemed more of a butterfly, hovering and gleaming in a garden, than a mere restless woman at home—she would have made an earnest observer restless, too.

I liked best to watch her, which I did unblushingly, when she made no pretense of an occupation at all, but stood gazing down into the street, or away into the western glow of the sky at sunset, quite unconscious of herself or her surroundings, thinking some long thought that stilled her for the moment and gave her face a touch of sadness more charming than its usual brilliant perversity.

Perverse she was at times, I was sure. There was a certain half turn—one could hardly call it a toss—to her head that probably set every brown curl dancing with defiance when she was a child, and her eyes shone out suddenly from between her enormously thick lashes with a sort of petulant, polished mischief. I used to feel sure she had *said* the very thing she should not, while she was trying to *do* the very thing she should.

I often wished she would come and explode all her impatience in my dull room. I was certain it would be like the setting off of those delicate Japanese fireworks that burst into a hundred sparkling shapes in your hand and never burn you.

A dozen times a day I wondered how that methodical piece of male clock-

work, her husband, ever came to marry her, and still more how she ever came to marry him! He looked twenty-five years older than she, and appeared to be the devoted disciple of dull routine. Morning after morning I saw him starting out at exactly the same minute, neat and precise, his clothes well brushed, his boots shining, the umbrella which he always carried rolled to a miraculous tightness—as one could have sworn he was inside. His face, above his gray mustache and short, pointed beard, was smooth, yet settled into the expression of self-satisfied decision belonging to the nature that has never seen any reason to doubt its own point of view.

Afternoon after afternoon I knew he would return at another exact moment, with the expression deepened by the events of his day; perhaps a little richer, a little more decided, a little better satisfied with himself than when he went out.

And in the meantime she—but to tell the truth I was extremely uneasy about her. Except for the times when she was taking care of or amusing a small boy—crippled, poor child, by hip-disease—who occasionally sat with her at the window in the mornings, and whom I took to be her stepson—the grocer's assistant having told my maid, who told me, that the next-door gentleman had been twice married—except for those times, she seemed so utterly irresponsible! And among her many visitors, pretty, vacant-looking, fine ladies and smart men who came often to the house, there was one man who came too often to suit my old-fashioned notions.

Three or four times a week he did not fail to appear. I got to know the sound of his ring, which was long and determined, like himself, and could easily be heard through the thin partition wall. By dint of thinking how it must make her heart beat, I found my own going double-quick whenever it occurred. And, as I say, he came often. Also he came alone, never linked in the bonds of fellowship with some immaculate twin, like the others, and

while he was there no one else was admitted.

Sometimes he stood in the bow-window waiting for her, and gave me a chance to observe his rather good-looking, square-featured face, and quick-tempered, reddish-brown eyes. He had always the same flash of happiness in them when he heard her step and turned to greet her.

A very dangerous contrast, truly, I thought, to the wooden countenance and snubby, repressive manner of her husband. I had seen it frequently exemplified when she met him of an evening with some half-hesitating comment, or question, or bit of news, sometimes even an attempt at the good-comradeship of a jest—if one could trust to the accuracy of the oblique view from my dark window to their lighted one—and which efforts were always put aside by him in the same high-and-mighty way.

"My stars, man," I used to say to myself, "you can't help being old and uninteresting, but you *can* help being cross!"

Her constant visitor showed her no high-mightiness, but ever the most devoted attention, and I could not wonder that she appreciated it to the full. Naturally, I was anxious.

For some weeks this alarming romance unfolded itself under my eyes, and then at last one night the climax came. It had been an unusually warm day, almost like spring, in spite of our being in the midst of December; and with the closing of the curtains and the lighting of the gas my steam-heated room became unbearably hot. I had read late, till long after midnight, and, finding myself still unable to sleep, I got up and wandered over to the open window, where I drew aside the blind to look into the cool quiet of the moonlit street.

From end to end it was empty. The shadows of the opposite houses fell half-way across it. The solid black of their uneven outline cutting into the silvery gray of the asphalt; the chimneys and chimney-pots making fantastic capes that jutted out beyond the

blank continent of the roofs. The windows were all dark, except in the third-story front of Number Twelve, where the grim nurse was doubtless ministering to the old gentleman with the broken leg, and in the basement of the house at the corner, where perhaps some sleepy footman waited up for the yellow-haired girls who had gone to a party.

The lady next door had gone to a party, too! I had seen her set out, a vision of white satin and sparkly crystal embroidery—like snow and icicles—with a flame-colored cloak blowing back from her shoulders, and a gleaming circle of diamonds in her hair. First there must have been a grand dinner, I imagined—for they went off at eight, she and her husband—and afterward a musical or a dance, perhaps, for he returned alone about eleven, and sent the carriage back for her. I heard him give the order. His thin, incisive voice came to me clearly through the open window, even when I was reading far back in my room.

Now, somehow, I fancied I should like to see her again before I went to sleep. Just the glimpse of her fluttering fineries as she stepped out of the carriage, and the sound of her high heels clicking across the pavement, made me feel a little more akin to youth and gaiety.

Half-past twelve I had heard him say. It could not be far from half-past one o'clock now. She ought soon to be coming back. I made up my mind to wait a little. The damp, soft night air was pleasant to breathe. Marvelously mild still, though colder than it had been. I wrapped my dressing-gown about me and sat down in my favorite chair to watch.

The electric light at the end of the block sputtered and winked till it made its globe look like a pale, cracked amethyst. I remembered a poor string of the stones in an old box in my mother's wardrobe when I was a child. The sky was almost visibly blue. The moon's round white face seemed to be thrust through it mockingly, like a clown's through the curtain at a pantomime.

I wondered how far human affairs were worthy of mocking. How far they were tragic—how far they might be all turned to comedy. I wondered why some of us were selected, so much against our wills, to play parts most opposed to our tastes. I wondered so many things that I quite lost myself and dozed before I heard the quick trotting of horses' feet and the whir of wheels approaching down the street.

There she was, at last! I leaned forward all alert. The vehicle rolled and rattled along, and to my surprise I saw it was an ordinary cab, and not the next-door carriage. It stopped almost under my window, however, and a man's hand from within opened the door. But apparently some subject of conversation was as yet unfinished, since, for a moment, nobody got out. Then I beheld the tall figure of the lady's constant visitor emerge, and then she herself appeared. The cabman, being paid, moved slowly away.

"You're going to walk home, then?" said the lady next door to her companion, following the retreating night-hawk with her eyes.

In the strong moonlight her cheeks seemed flushed. I thought her hair slightly disheveled—on one side particularly—and her diamond circlet was certainly a little awry. Perhaps she had been dancing hard, for she had a great heap of favors—flowers and feathers, silk bags, muffs, long sashes of bright ribbons—on one arm. The faintest jingling of small bells followed her as she moved. She crossed the sidewalk to the foot of her steps, and then paused looking up at the sky. The man stood beside her.

"I hate to leave you," he said, with his hand on her shoulder.

Her gaze came down to earth again, at about the height of his eyes.

"So do I hate to leave you," she answered, sighing. Then she brightened suddenly. "But we've had a delicious evening," she added. "Of course he never would have let me stay if he had known you were there. He would be very angry to think you had brought me home."

"Home," said the man. "It's not your home! Don't go in! Don't go back! I can't bear it any more!"

"My dear," she answered gently, "didn't we agree that it was best? He would never forgive it if—"

"He never will, anyhow," interrupted the man impatiently. "I am tired of waiting. I loathe all this hole-in-the-corner, secret, furtive business."

She sighed again, and then she laughed. "It's been rather fun—at times," she suggested, going closer to him as she spoke.

"I can't take it quite like that, Lotta. I want you too much."

"And do you think it's easy for me?" she broke out passionately. "If it were not for the child—for his ultimate good, I mean. His future—"

"I'll attend to his future."

"We can't discuss it here, Jack," she pleaded. "And I can't let you in now. It would not be safe to risk a quarrel—"

"Then come to my rooms."

I nearly fainted with horror. But she was calm. She even smiled.

"Heavens! What a scandal!" she cried.

"Lotta, darling." He held out his hands to her.

She dropped her shining skirts from her grasp, and almost ran into his arms.

"I'll come to-morrow, dear. I don't care what happens! I truly will, to-morrow," she said, and then caught her petticoats together again and began to mount the steps quickly, as if she feared her resolution might give way if she stayed beside him. At the top, however, she turned with a sudden start and a little cry.

"Jack, I've lost my latch-key. See—see if you can stop the cab. It may be there."

The cab had reached the end of the block. He ran down the street after it, hailed it, arrested it, met it half-way as it came back. He and the driver searched it inch by inch, but with no result. I saw him shake his head as he returned. She also had been looking wildly among her glittering, gleaming

draperies and the tangled mass of favors—evidently with no better success.

"I shall *have* to ring the bell," she announced in despair, "and the whole house will be in a tumult! I declare I'd rather go back with you, and sneak in to-morrow morning early, with the milkman."

She was quite visibly in fun, but he caught at the idea.

"Do! Do! Nothing could be better. You see how Fate has absolutely arranged it. Only you sha'n't sneak back with the milkman. You sha'n't sneak back at all. We'll stop sneaking. You'll stay on boldly forever. See! The cab is there still. Come!"

She stood still, hesitating, at the top of the steps.

"The child will miss his favors so in the morning. He always comes to my room for them."

"The man thinks he has missed his long enough." He went up to her. "Come, dear. If you don't make the break now, you'll find some absurd reason for not making it. We'll telephone at breakfast-time, and after that—"

"After that the deluge," she finished for him. "Well"—and her voice rose excitedly—"it will be the ending of all things here! But—I'll come!"

She put her arm through his and looked up into his face with the sweetest trust. Very slowly they came down the steps together.

I, who had been leaning, almost paralyzed, against the window-jamb, now threw open the shutters and nearly precipitated myself into the street.

"Oh, my dear, my dear, *don't!*" I cried, wringing appealing hands in the air. "Don't go with him! I'll take you in! I'll do anything for you! But, I beseech you, do *not* leave your husband's roof at this hour with this young man!"

Two amazed countenances were lifted to mine. Absolutely idiotic with astonishment, they both appeared as they gazed up at me. I hung farther out into the night.

"My house is open to you. Don't go with him," I reiterated.

"Why, it's the nice old invalid lady

who sits so much in the window," she murmured to him.

"Yes." I took it up. "It's the nice old invalid, who'd have given a good deal in her youth to have any one love her enough to *want* to run away with her, but who still begs you, beseeches you, to go back to your husband."

The lady next door drew herself up to her full height.

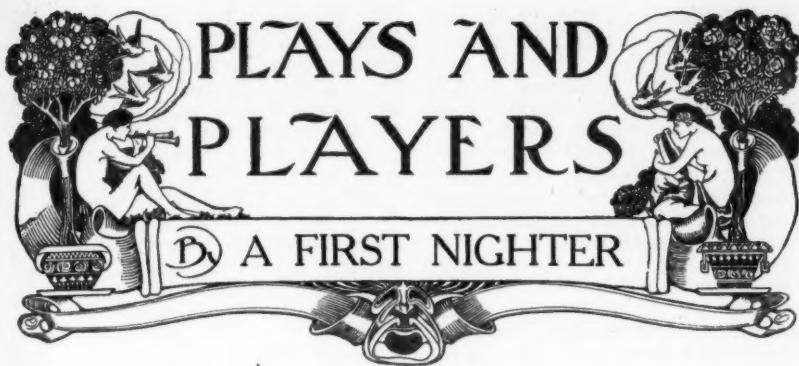
"You seem to have been listening," she said, "to a great deal that does not concern you. But since you are so interested in my welfare"—here she threw me a mischievous glance—"you will be glad to know that the roof I leave is my father-in-law's, and the man I'm going with is my husband."

With these words, she turned and ran up the street, and in an instant she and her companion had skipped into the waiting cab and driven away.

Subsequent inquiry revealed the truth of her statement. The gray-bearded gentleman—a very conventional and pompous old money-maker—had quarreled with his son for coming to grief in some perfectly legitimate, but mistaken, business speculation. He had offered, however, to support his daughter-in-law and her child on the understanding that his son accepted a certain position he had procured for him out West.

This the young man agreed to do, but finding, after a time, that better things came in his way, and he had opportunities of recovering himself entirely, and making good all his losses, if he returned to New York, he applied for permission to do so, was refused, took Fate into his own hands, and came back to find his father not only unforgiving, but obstinately set against recognizing the success he had attained. The doors were supposed to be shut against him, and his wife, hoping to effect a reconciliation by impatient waiting, had allowed them, ostensibly, to remain so.

How the old, gray-bearded gentleman took it I never knew. They said he had gone abroad for the rest of the winter. I like to think he will return, mollified, in the spring.



PLAYS AND PLAYERS

A FIRST NIGHTER

A month of many failures, from which stars may learn the futility of personal appeal, without good plays to back it. One reason why players should not be egotistic. Thompson Buchanan, a newcomer, writes the bright comedy of the month, "A Woman's Way," acted charmingly by Grace George. The exquisite Miss Doro in a farce which does not suit her. Julia Marlowe in a blank-verse rehash of French Revolutionary melodrama. Kathryn Kidder returns to the stage. An unfortunate play selected for Carlotta Nilsson. A race-prejudice play that is crude and uninviting



WO plays were produced in New York during the last month which, ten years ago, would have had a fair chance of success. Presented at the present time when the natural tendency is toward plays which depict the actual life of to-day, and before a public which does not want to labor too hard with its imagination, they were both foredoomed to failure, though managers, playwrights, and the principal performers persistently refuse to realize the changes in the times.

It is not particularly pleasant to have to begin a review of the month with the chronicles of failure. And yet, such has been the scarcity of successes that there is hardly anything else to chronicle. A month or two ago I referred to the sudden advent of plays that were vigorous in themselves and that demanded virility in the acting. And, as readers of AINSLEE's may recall, I noted the fact that the development of the stronger drama was concurrent

with the entrance of a number of male stars into the metropolitan arena.

The women have practically held the field to themselves during the month that has just passed, and the result is not exactly what the suffragettes would call a strengthening of their cause. Five star actresses—count them—have appeared in just that many plays since I last sat down to write for the readers of this magazine, and of that number only one has scored. Six new plays have been produced in this rather barren month, and of these just one will probably be on view when this article appears in type. Three of the plays are in their last gasps as I write; a fourth will pass, within the week, to that "unknown bourne," the road, whence bad plays do not return; and the fifth will alone remain to represent the active striving of a playwright, a manager, and a star, each of whom has some occasion for rejoicing in the success it has achieved. What the fate of the sixth play will be I cannot yet officially announce. Unofficially, I am inclined to think that its end will soon come, for its merits are so slight that even the

most skilful boozing, which it has thus far lacked, will scarcely serve to prolong its term of life.

When I note the failures of hitherto successful players in pieces which do not happen to meet the requirements of the thing we call the public taste, I am always inclined to wonder why it is we hear and see so much of the egotism of the actor. For the best of them is unable to achieve success without a proper vehicle. And yet the players never seem to learn the lesson, and their managers are often equally obtuse. Scan any play-bill that comes to hand, and you will find the star's name in the largest caps, while the poor playwright, upon whose modest effort success depends more largely, must be content with lower case, the lower the better, from the actor's and the manager's point of view.

Mr. Thompson Buchanan, whose name does not yet appear in "Who's Who," but who will certainly arrive at that distinction if his first piece is any omen of the future, is the one playwright of the month who may be named in connection with something other than a casualty. Mr. William A. Brady is the manager who has the credit of discovering this new American author, and Miss Grace George, in private life Mrs. Brady, is the actress who leads him before the footlights. Incidentally it may be mentioned that while manager and actress have thus given him his opportunity, Mr. Buchanan has returned the favor by giving Miss George a rôle which enables her to continue in the flush of popularity.

For some years Miss Grace George labored under the delusion that she was an emotional and pathetic actress. Then, one happy day, she conceived the idea of appearing in Sardou's well-worn farce, "Divorçons," made over slightly by Miss Margaret Mayo, who did the work quite well. "Divorçons" was put in at Wallack's as a stop-gap, and proved a lucky magnet, as much on account of the charm of Miss George's acting as on account of its undoubted qualities as entertainment. It has been played in New York repeat-

edly for years, but no one, not even Mrs. Fiske, had been able to prolong its popularity beyond a few nights of an occasional revival. Miss George, however, stayed at Wallack's for many weeks, subsequently visiting London, and then touring the country with success.

But it was obviously impossible in these days of many novelties for her to go on playing "Divorçons" forever, so when the present season was under way, Miss George found herself under the necessity of finding another play. That was where Mr. Thompson stepped into the picture. No one had ever heard of him as a playwright, though he enjoyed some acquaintance among stage people, the result of journalistic experiences and associations. He had a play, "A Woman's Way," which he thought Miss George would like, and Mr. Brady thought so, too. When Miss George read it it was a case of the "three of us," and the play was put into rehearsal. After a few weeks on the road it was brought to Hackett's, and it is there still. And Mr. Thompson, from being a comparative nobody on a New York newspaper, has come to be a somebody along the Great White Way. This, so far as I know, is the first play he has written. I have devoted so much space to this biographical account because it is a striking illustration of the suddenness with which success in the theater sometimes happens.

And yet, apart from a certain happiness of expression, an ability at adapting an old idea to a new requirement, and a facility for conveying a comic idea through speech and dialogue, there is nothing in the play that need cause astonishment. Mr. Buchanan's talent, as it is shown in this play, is singularly like that of Mr. W. Somerset Maugham, last year's "one best bet" among the English playwrights, whose plays "Lady Frederick" and "Jack Straw" I have described as they were acted by John Drew and Miss Ethel Barrymore.

Mr. Buchanan, like Mr. Maugham, appears to have a delightful faculty for

taking an old theatrical dress, turning it inside out, adding a few trimmings of his own, and presto! handing it to your actress a neat and tidy garment ready for wear and admiration. It may not be the finest sort of talent, but it is a useful one in these days when the demand for suitable plays is far in excess of the actual output.

When you come to analyze "A Woman's Way" it appears to be the gossamer sort of stuff that evades cold-type description. Mr. Thompson has taken the "Divorçons" theme and changed it about so that the wife, about to lose her husband, hits upon the best expedient for winning him back again. On the eve of prospective divorce—the husband having foolishly allowed himself to get wrecked while automobiling with another lady—the wife decides to prove for herself whether he loves her or loves her not. When she puts the question to him he answers, like The Gentleman from Mississippi: "Damfino." So three acts must be gone through before she finds the answer.

The wife promptly invites her rival to dinner, a proceeding which scandalizes most of her female relatives and arouses grave fears in the matrimonial members of the household. For it appears that each and every son of them has had an affair with the widow—you have already guessed she is a widow—and each is afraid the others will find out all about it. Moreover, the wife has at hand an agreeable platonic friend—he also knows the widow, not too wisely but too well—who, in order to assist in the little game of winning back the husband, agrees to flirt with the wife desperately whenever hubby happens round. Against such a combination what can the poor man do? Simply flounder hopelessly for a little while, then take the bait and turn the widow out into the cold, as no fit inmate of his now-going-to-be-happy little home.

But it is not the story of "A Woman's Way" that counts in the result so much as the cheerfulness with which Mr. Buchanan tells it, and with which Miss George and her chief associate,

Mr. Worthing, act it. There are no end of bright and telling lines; there is just a touch of real and appealing sentiment, and there is a genial, happy vein of satire which lays bare the follies and the foibles of several well-established institutions in this gay New York. Mr. Klein, in "The Third Degree," goes for the yellow journals with a bludgeon, and Mr. Buchanan, who has been a yellow journalist, goes for them with the point of a sarcastic pen, and the little play, though it deals with the eternal triangle, hasn't the trace of a suggestion of French farce purified for our more fastidious consumption.

Miss George, a succession of pretty pictures in some unusually charming frocks, plays the little wife with an irresistible show of spirit, charm, and grace. She is a piquant little person, who should be good now and stick to comedy, in which she is very, very good indeed. Certainly no actress on our stage could play this rôle with more finesse, more varied shadings of humor and sly spirit. And certainly no rôle in which she has ever appeared has given her a better opportunity to show herself at her delightful best. Mr. Worthing, too, is admirably cast, playing the rôle of the husband in a vein that approaches burlesque at times but which brings out all its comic qualities. The part of a reporter is played like one by Edward Fielding, while Miss Dorothy Tennant and Mr. Henry Miller Jr. are the best of the others. Some of the rôles were dreadfully miscast, but, fortunately, the mistakes in this respect do not detract too much from a generally merry little piece.

It is impossible to speak in terms of unequivocal pleasure of "The Richest Girl," in which that very exquisite human fragment, Miss Marie Doro, has recently been appearing at the Criterion Theater. "The Richest Girl" is the result of collaboration on the part of the Messrs. Gavault and Morton, the same men who prepared "My Wife" for the English stage, but, unlike that piece, in which John Drew and Billie Burke appeared last year, it has lost in adap-

tation any qualities which in the original may have given it real value as a comedy. It is a whimsical idea gone wrong, and what more pitiful than that in the theater, where ideas of any kind are scarce?

As in the piece I have just described, an automobile accident figures herein. But in this case the incident is a precursor of a marriage, not a menace to matrimonial bliss.

"The Richest Girl" is a *Mademoiselle Benjamine Monnier*, daughter of the "chocolate king" of Paris, and while she is on her way home after an evening's spin in papa's car, a tire explodes. There must be a halt for repairs at the rural retreat of two young men from town. One of them is a waggish artist, a very forward sort of person, who contrives the destruction of a second tire, while pretending to aid the chauffeur, the result being that *Mademoiselle Benjamine Monnier* is obliged to take forcible possession of the premises. The second of the young men, who is as retiring and bashful as his friend is aggressive, objects to this proceeding, but is forced to give up his room, so that the interloping maiden may have a place to rest. In the morning his fiancée, with her father, under whose patronage the bashful young man holds a position in a government office, arrives at the cottage, and, discovering "The Richest Girl," at once believes the worst. By the time the girl's father comes to take her home, she has succeeded in compromising herself and the young government clerk, and by her persistent roguery she puts the finishing touch on the situation the next day; for, contrary to the young clerk's wishes, she calls at his office, insists on staying to lunch, and finally succeeds in breaking off his engagement to the lady of his choice and having him discharged from his post.

At this point the young man summons up enough courage to tell her what he thinks, dilating at some length upon the selfishness that has characterized her in every act. Thereupon she promptly bursts into tears and makes the astonishing discovery that she has

loved him all the time. Incidentally by this time he has begun to realize a peculiar feeling about the heart, and "they marry in the end."

Thus, the desired outcome is accomplished, but only after the fabric of the story has grown sheer with overworking.

Miss Marie Doro's métier, whatever it may be, and there seems to be some difficulty in discovering it, is certainly not farce, and though she has agreeable moments in the piece, the general result is disappointing. She is an extremely dainty little person, who, from all accounts, has brains and talent, but she has been unfortunate thus far in the rôles selected to exploit her. And her experience and resource are not yet such as to enable her to adapt herself to whatever happens to be chosen.

In other years Miss Julia Marlowe, with "A Goddess of Reason," a play of the French Revolution, written in verse by Mary Johnston, and Kathryn Kidder, with "A Woman of Impulse," a melodrama by Louis Anspacher, might not have met the defeat to which conditions at the present doomed them.

"A Goddess of Reason," despite its rhetorical trappings and the richness of pictorial splendor with which it is mounted on the stage, is the conventional play of the Terror. Its theme is all familiar. *Yvette*, the heroine of the story, played by Miss Marlowe with all the plastic grace which has won admiration in the past, is a young peasant woman, who dreams of her people's freedom and who in time becomes their leader. She has loved an aristocrat, of course, whom she would save from the guillotine, but in a sudden passionate fit of jealousy she denounces him to the mob. Then, when it is too late, she repents, and with him goes to death, denouncing the cause which she has previously espoused. As a spectacle the play contains much to commend it to attention, and Miss Marlowe's beautiful declamatory style still weaves the magic spell, but she has far too much opportunity for declamation to please the modern audience which wants more action and less speech.

The author of "A Woman of Impulse"—the play in which Miss Kathryn Kidder returns to the stage—is her husband, Mr. Louis Anspacher, a professor at Columbia University and a lecturer on the drama, which makes it all the more surprising that in fashioning a piece for his wife's reentry he has harked back to a form of thing outlawed fully ten or fifteen years ago. "A Woman of Impulse" is a futile sort of play, a mechanical contraption of the kind that Sardou might have written in his youth, but which moves with far too much creaking of the springs to be effective now.

A first act in which the playwright presents a study of an opera singer's temperament, gave promise of something better than the badly melodramatic story which the play developed, and which ultimately led up to the murder of the villain, who, after having tried to tempt the singer, faithful to her husband, goes by stealth to her maiden sister's bedchamber, where the husband arrives in time to see and misunderstand the purpose of the visit. As the young girl struggles in the arms of the interloper she stabs him with an ornamental dagger, the husband breaking in upon the struggle and dealing the man a blow which sends him to the floor. Thereupon it requires a whole act of cross-examination by the coroner to determine whether the man died from the blow or the stab, and to bring about the explanation which reveals the wife's entire innocence of evil intent or act. When the coroner on the opening night, having assured himself that it was the husband's blow that did the deed, brought in a verdict of justifiable homicide and announced that the whole affair would be a secret among friends, even the polite and specially select assemblage found a cause for laughter.

The failure is all the more regrettable because Miss Kidder on her reappearance created a most favorable impression.

So, too, there has been cause for regret in the fact that Miss Carlotta Nilsson, an actress of exceptional ability in emotional rôles, has been unfortunate

enough to select a play this season which does not present her in a light which will shed much radiance on her path.

"This Man and This Woman," a play by Avery Hopwood, who was collaborator with Channing Pollock in "Clothes," tells the story of a young governess who has been indiscreet, after the fashion common to many plays, and who finds herself in a critical condition when the play begins. The young man in the case refuses to make her his wife, so she sends for a minister, locks the door, produces a revolver, and forces her errant lover to consent to the ceremony at the pistol's mouth. The second act, six years later, reveals the governess, now a respected teacher in a rural school, with a precocious child about the house, whose pretty prattling arouses the latent parental instincts in the cad, its father, who conveniently arrives. He forcibly carries the child to his own home, followed by the despairing mother. Before the final curtain has fallen the husband has confessed his fault, the wife her undying affection, and there is a promise of happiness in the years to come.

Mr. Hopwood has undoubtedly talent for the theater, but he has insisted in this play upon ignoring all the conventions and creating no satisfactory substitutes of his own. That is one way in which good plays never have been written.

Finally the month has seen the initial production of a play by Thomas Addison, made from a book, in which the question of race prejudice between Jew and Gentile is argued and acted out. "Meyer and Son" is the title of it, and as usual in such cases it develops a love-story between Christian hero and Jewish heroine, with parental opposition developing on both sides.

There may be a play in this subject—in fact, if reports are to be believed, Mr. Israel Zangwill has succeeded in writing that play in "The Melting Pot" which New York will see next season—but Mr. Addison has turned out only a cheap and tawdry sort of thing.



FOR BOOK LOVERS

*Archibald
Lowery
Sessions*

Some reasons why Ainslee's has cause to be proud. "Infatuation," by Lloyd Osbourne, interesting but not particularly pleasant. "Tono-Bungay" a distinct departure for H. G. Wells. Well planned and well constructed is Clara E. Laughlin's "The Death of Lincoln." "The Red Mouse," by William Hamilton Osborne, has not one redeeming feature. Louis Tracy's "The Message" a capital story of adventure. "The House With No Address," by E. Nesbit, very different from the author's previous work. All about wheat-raising in Western Canada is "Lorimer of the Northwest," by Harold Bindloss. Gordon Holmes' "By Force of Circumstances" holds the attention throughout. Joseph C. Lincoln as fascinating and humorous as ever in "Cy Whittaker's Place"



HE promise was made to you on this page last month that you should be further taken into our confidence about Mr. George Barr McCutcheon's serial story which we have secured for AINSLEE'S and which will follow Mr. MacGrath's. How many of you are there, who buy and read AINSLEE'S, who have never heard of Graustark? For those of you who have not—the very few—we will tell you that Mr. McCutcheon has written two books about that delightful place and that those two books have sold over one million copies; that one of them was dramatized several years ago and is still one of the greatest of theatrical successes. Of course you know what this means. Nobody pays much attention to anything that does not interest him, and such tributes as have been paid to the Graustark stories are proof enough of their universal interest.

AINSLEE'S has secured for you the latest of Mr. McCutcheon's tales of Graustark and will begin it in the August number. We think we are entitled to feel a bit self-complacent over

this achievement, for it is something to be proud of to score a point in the face of competition such as a story of this kind creates.

We have an abundance of reasons for our satisfaction with ourselves. For instance, a letter came to us the other day—one of many—from a gentleman who said he had been a regular reader of AINSLEE'S for eight years and added among other things: "There are few men who keep closer tab on the leading magazines than I do and you can take it from me that, so far as both quantity and quality are concerned, AINSLEE'S has it all over the rest of them."

We frankly confess we like that sort of talk and we will take as much of it as you find time to give us. So tell us if you do not think the contents of this number are pretty good. Of course you will say that of Mr. MacGrath's serial and of Marie Van Vorst's, which, by the way, is concluded. We are reasonably certain you will have the same opinion of Leonard Merrick's complete novel "A Family Tangle," and you doubtless know that Mr. Merrick is one of the really big ones among contemporary novelists. Among the short stories you will probably read Jo-

seph C. Lincoln's first of all, and the others you will take with just as much pleasure.

We would like to talk to you indefinitely about this number, but we have only space to tell you that William Armstrong's chat about music is something that will divert and entertain you as much as the best fiction you ever read.



"Infatuation" is the title of Lloyd Osbourne's latest novel, which is published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company.

It does not impress us as a particularly pleasant tale, though it has an undoubted interest which will carry most readers through it successfully. Mr. Osbourne's purpose seems to have been to show how completely a woman's love will blind her to the cheap, tawdry, sordid things she encounters, but he has made the initial mistake of asking his readers to believe that a girl of the type of Phyllis Ladd could surrender so completely and permanently to an attraction for a man like Adair. The very fact that, without her mother's care in her childhood, she was forced, to a greater or less degree, to depend upon herself and upon companionship with her father, and to think and to suffer and to understand, would make it next to impossible that she should lose herself in a mad infatuation for a leading man in a cheap theatrical company.

Her father is the magnate of Carthage, "an old-fashioned city," with many substantial connections, both business and social, in which his daughter has acquired her self-discipline. A traveling stock company comes to town and Phyllis sees the performance and the leading man, goes home and dreams of him, begins a correspondence with him which leads to a meeting which results in her abject surrender and finally her marriage to Adair.

The balance of the tale is devoted to a description of her sordid and humiliating experiences as the stock actor's wife. Her father, of course, casts her off; her husband can get no profit-

able engagement because of his habits. But the book ends with the appearance of Rolls Reece, a dramatist who has a play in which a part is given to Adair. Reece also succeeds in effecting a reconciliation between Phyllis and her father and all the consequences are happy.



"Tono-Bungay," by H. G. Wells, published by Duffield & Co., is written in a style that is a distinct departure from that which we have learned to expect from Mr. Wells. He has, in the first place, dropped the pseudo-scientific theme and substituted for it plain human nature, and the change shows him to much more advantage.

"Tono-Bungay" is almost encyclopedic in dimensions and Mr. Wells seems to rejoice in the space he has secured for himself, for he writes as if he were taking solid satisfaction in his work. In this respect the book is somewhat suggestive of William De Morgan or Joseph Conrad.

The book takes its name from that of a patent medicine which young Ponderevo, who tells the tale, and his uncle succeed in promoting and out of which they make fabulous sums of money. This leads to other schemes and as financiers they become the sensation of London. The result of it all is inevitable from the beginning, and when the collapse comes they both leave England in a flying-machine, an invention of the nephew.

Much of the story is devoted to the personal reflections, observations, and reminiscences of the narrator, who is inclined to rather inconclusive philosophizing about life, a sort of writing which will hardly appeal to popular taste, though it may have its attractions for some few readers.

The only women who figure in the book to any degree are young Ponderevo's aunt, the girl to whom he is, for a time, married, and, after his divorce, the woman for whom he experiences the only real passion of his life.

It is not a book to be gone over hastily, and unless one has the time and inclination to read deliberately it were better not to begin it.



Miss Clara E. Laughlin has contributed to the mass of literature brought out by the centennial of Lincoln's birth a book which she calls "The Death of Lincoln," and which is published by Doubleday, Page & Co.

She has constructed a very interesting story by collecting and putting together a narrative from the facts preceding and following the shooting of the President by John Wilkes Booth, her obvious purpose being to correct some traditional notions about persons and events and to do justice to some of the unfortunate victims.

She makes it quite clear that there was at no time a conspiracy to kill Mr. Lincoln; that there was, indeed, a plan to kidnap him and carry him off to Richmond, but that it failed. Those who were concerned in it with Booth refused to go further with him, whereupon the idea of assassination seized him and developed in his brain until it took shape in action.

It is made clear that Mrs. Surratt was entirely innocent and that Payne was the only one whose execution could be justified.

The book is well planned and well constructed, and is worth reading not only on account of its historical value but for its interest as a story.



"The Red Mouse," by William Hamilton Osborne, is published by Dodd, Mead & Co., and is rather a weird tale of how a district attorney demands a bribe of eight hundred thousand dollars from the wife of a man charged with murder to save her husband from execution. She pays over the money, though it takes the last penny she has in the world.

In spite of this her husband is convicted, though the prosecuting officer manages, in some way not entirely clear, to carry out his promise that the

man shall be liberated. Of course it turns out in the end that the husband is innocent of murder, but every fact points to his guilt and he himself is satisfied of it.

It is by no means an easy task to put a just valuation on such a tale as this, for there seems to be no redeeming feature about it. One may put up with absurdities in plot when the plot deals with characters that make an impression; or, on the other hand, poor characterization may be tolerated if there are skill in construction and interest in the events.

But in this book everything that goes to make an interesting story is wanting and the reader, if he has sufficient patience to finish it, will lay it aside with a sigh of relief, and with a feeling of wonder as to why it was published.



Western Africa seems to be growing in favor as a field for enterprising writers of fiction. The latest novel of this type is by Louis Tracy, and is published by E. J. Clode under the title of "The Message."

The story has its impelling motive in a presumed German ambition for territorial acquisitions in Africa at the expense of English interests, and tells how that ambition was discovered and defeated by Captain Arthur Warden, deputy commissioner, Nigeria Protectorate, with the assistance, more or less indirect, of Miss Evelyn Dane.

Captain Warden, who is enjoying a well-earned furlough in and around Cowes, accidentally meets Miss Dane who is on her way to board an American steam-yacht, having secured a position as companion to the wife of the owner, one Baumgartner. This acquaintance, which of course develops into a love-affair, leads to the discovery that Baumgartner is negotiating with German interests for the purpose of stirring up a revolt among the natives against British authority in Africa, and of course Warden promptly reports to headquarters in Downing Street. His furlough is cut short and

he is sent back to Africa, and disappears into the desert and is finally given up as lost.

Meantime, Miss Dane becomes a member of the Baumgartner establishment and is taken to the West Coast on the yacht, Baumgartner being much concerned about the success of his conspiracy.

It finally comes about that Warden turns up just in time to defeat the German plans and he and Evelyn are happily brought together once more.



It is somewhat unexpected to find that the author of "The Complete Amorist," "The Wouldbegoods," and "The Red House" is also the author of "The House With No Address," which Doubleday, Page & Co. has just published. It is unexpected because E. Nesbit's work hitherto has been as different as possible, in theme at least, from this rather gruesome tale.

Mrs. Bland has hitherto taken especial delight in writing about the sunny side of life and has made her work all the more attractive by the good-natured cynicism which has tintured her view of things. There is a trace of this quality in her new book, but the things that happened to Alexandra Mundy and Edmund Templar and Mr. Saccage and Ferrier had very little sunshine about them.

The book might be called a Salome story, as Alexandra's Salome dance marks the climax of the tragedy of her life and those of the three men. The dance, as it has been exploited on the American stage during the past season, has been grim enough with a make-believe head of John the Baptist, but it is nothing in comparison with the realism of this tale.

The house with no address, in which Alexandra lived in London, supplies an element of mystery and it is made clear enough toward the end that the mystery was necessary to her mode of life. Templar, though represented as the hero, breaks down lamentably and, as it seems to us, unnecessarily under the

strain of misunderstood circumstances and so gives Ferrier his opportunity.

It is an interesting story, chiefly because of the author's skill in presenting her characters. The plot and construction, having once been formulated, are of a kind easy to develop.



It is difficult to say definitely whether the new story by Harold Bindloss, "Lorimer of the Northwest," belongs to the class of industrial or Western stories or is a combination of both.

Lorimer himself, who tells it, seems to be in some doubt; for in his "prologue," he explains that in beginning it he nibbles his pen, "waiting for the inspiration that is strangely slow in coming, while my wife, who was Grace Carrington, smiles over her sewing and suggests that it is high time to begin." His partner, Harry Lorraine, advises him to "tell them simply how we live and work." So he takes up his weary pen and tells "the story simply as it happened from the beginning."

It is all about wheat-raising in Western Canada, on the Assiniboian prairie; of the struggle of two young English immigrants who, mere boys, undertook the task, almost without resources, of transforming a tract of unbroken prairie into a wheat-farm. If Lorimer's account of it is authentic it is the kind of enterprise that needs more capital than these two young men had at their command. So it is not surprising that they failed—at first—and had to turn their energies to working on a piece of railroad construction.

Fortunately for them, Lorimer had a rich uncle in England who was fond enough of him to keep watch of him from afar and gave just the right kind of assistance at just the right time, his main purpose being to preserve to the young men their self-respect.

The love element, which is another term for feminine interest, is pleasantly supplied by Grace Carrington and Lorimer's sister Aline. Grace is the daughter of a gentleman, Colonel Carrington, who aspires to establish baron-

ial estates in the Northwest, he, of course, being lord of the manor. A Captain Ormond is the villain and furnishes excitement for Lorimer.



A good story of mystery and adventure is Gordon Holmes' "By Force of Circumstances," which is published by Edward J. Clode.

Mr. Arthur Leigh is the hero of the tale, Miss Elinor Hinton the heroine, the villain being a gentleman named Bagot, who is described as an ex-professor of anthropology in Harvard University.

Leigh, previously disinherited by his grandfather, has returned to England after achieving much glory in the Boer War, to find that he is after all the owner of the family estates, the old gentleman having apparently relented and then opportunely died.

Miss Hinton almost immediately appears with a mysteriously acquired fund of information about Leigh's affairs, and without appreciable delay he is plunged into a tangle of which he had no conception. Her presence in the neighborhood is explained by the fact that her father, described as a "Philadelphia ironmaster," is cruising in his yacht near the Leigh estates, which border the English Channel.

Bagot, who is the educated, refined scoundrel, is by degrees disclosed as engaged in a scheme to get possession of Leigh's property, his motive being to secure one hundred and fifty thousand pounds which he, with one or two others, has reason to believe was hidden by the grandfather on the premises.

In the contest with this man Leigh plays a rather insignificant part and, it must be confessed, one that is not altogether creditable to his intelligence. Two murders are committed almost under his nose, and he himself is repeatedly saved from the consequences of his blunders by Miss Hinton and a detective from Scotland Yard. The young lady is in love with him, however, and overlooks his lack of brains.

The book is exciting and interesting and holds the attention throughout.

We have long had the conviction that a short story in AINSLEE'S by Joseph C. Lincoln always has a special interest for the readers of the magazine; we have evidence enough of it every time a story of his appears. The books that he has published have been equally popular, and the last, "Cy Whittaker's Place," published by D. Appleton & Co., ought to be, and doubtless will be, enthusiastically welcomed.

Mr. Lincoln's manner, the types of which he writes, and the scenes of his stories are so familiar that all that it seems necessary to say of this new book is that it will be found just as fascinating and humorous as "Cap'n Eri" or any of his successors.

It seems to us that Mr. Lincoln has succeeded, in all his characterization, in mellowing the New England type very materially, and Cy Whittaker, the latest creation, is, if anything, more attractive than any of his predecessors.



Important New Books.

"The Actress," Louise Closser Hale, Harper & Bros.

"The Perfume of the Lady in Black," G. Leroux, Brentano's.

"The Cuckoo's Nest," Martha G. D. Bianchi, Duffield & Co.

"The Hands of Compulsion," Amelia E. Barr, Dodd, Mead & Co.

"Less Than Kin," Alice Duer Miller, Henry Holt & Co.

"Whither Goest Thou?" J. J. Bell, Fleming H. Revell.

"The Gorgeous Borgia," Justin H. McCarthy, Harper & Bros.

"The Wiles of Sexton Maginnis," Maurice Francis Egan, Century Co.

"The Raven," George Hazelton, D. Appleton & Co.

"The Lost Cabin Mine," Frederick Niven, John Lane Co.

"The Ring and the Man," Cyrus Townsend Brady, Moffat, Yard & Co.

"Special Messenger," Robert W. Chambers, D. Appleton & Co.

"The Settler," Herman Whitaker, Harper & Bros.

"The King of Arcadia," Francis Lynde, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"The Royal End," Henry Harland, Dodd, Mead & Co.

REVOLUTION LINEN INDUSTRY

An American Conquest

NOTE.—The admirable and pertinent articles by Mr. Daniel J. Sully, running as a series in the *Cosmopolitan*, give so clear and appreciative a survey of the Cotton Industry that they cannot fail to astonish the general public, who never suspected that alien nations dominate the United States in the Cotton Kingdom. But more extraordinary than this is the fact that America, the best flax-growing section of the world—for the plant can be grown successfully in any of our States—is a practical nullity in the linen industry, being entirely dependent on foreign countries for its fabric supply. Happily there has been an inauguration of linen manufacture in this country under auspices so remarkable that there is strong probability that Mr. Sully will, in the course of the next two or three years, have to modify his opinion that "The reign of cotton is forever." It will be a subordinate reign when the new linen processes are in extensive use.

IT is not always wise to be positive in opinions as to what can or cannot be done by the devotees of science. The "impossible" is being accomplished in so many directions nowadays that this may, without irreverence, be styled the age of practical miracles. Perhaps nothing is more impossible than fixing the limit of man's creative genius. Some one has gone so far as to paraphrase Shakespeare in the words, "There is a divinity within us that shapes all things as we conceive them," and many products of the Nineteenth-Twentieth century rather bear out the idea.

While there have been many more startling and sensational results of scientific investigation, nothing is more interesting in point of historic association than the recent discovery how to simplify the industrial use of flax, the aristocrat of plants from the ancient of days. The romance of linen extends from the earliest records of time, and this most beautiful product of the looms is as indisputedly the Queen of fabrics to-day as it was when Solomon reigned or the priests of Egypt made it the chief insignia of their sacred office. But flax has been as obstinately self-willed as imperial autocrats have ever been through all the ages; and, until Yankee ingenuity prevailed over it, the plant has demanded long and laborious and expensive persuasion before yielding its soft and glossy fibre to the spinners. Pliny, the historian-naturalist, described the method of handling flax by the Egyptians of his day; and the description fits, with no material variation, the European practice of to-day. The total time between the "pulling"

of the flax and the delivery of the finished goods is, by the old method, about thirty weeks; and were it not that in Europe the preparatory work is done by peasants who work for a beggar's pittance, it would be impossible in Europe as it is in this country to make linen at prices within the means of others than the rich. The difficulty has been to dissolve the fats and gums that penetrate and tenaciously bind the fibres and cement them to the woody stem. A long process of "retting" (partial rotting in water or by exposure to dew), followed by an equal time for "drying" and still longer time for "scutching" and "hackling" (to free the fibre from the woody particles, or "shive," and get it into soft, flexible lengths for spinning), has been necessary—work that must be done by the cheapest of cheap labor in order to leave the manufacturers a suitable margin of profit on the market price of the finished fabric.

It had long been the opinion of experts that any satisfactory means to reduce the time of "retting," and coincidentally free the fibre from gums and shive, would increase the value and importance of the linen industry by many millions of dollars a year. The rewards of possible success induced many scientific and practical men to engage in experiments to that end, and in the course of years vast sums of money have been expended in the hitherto futile effort to gain this mastery of flax. Though there had been disappointment enough to discourage new experimenters, it was inevitable that some one should at last solve the problem, and it is not surprising, perhaps, that it was a Yankee, Benjamin C. Mudge, of

Massachusetts, a graduate of the State Institute of Technology, who achieved the distinction. It took him between twenty and thirty years of exceptionally rigorous and determined application to the task before he secured the practical results sought; but he finally mastered the processes (mechanical and chemical) that are now being employed with great commercial success by the Oxford Linen Mills, of North Brookfield, Mass., who have acquired the exclusive rights to Mr. Mudge's inventions. The industrial importance of these processes can be appreciated from the fact that, wonderful as it may seem, they convert raw flax into pure, white linen fibre, ready carded for spinning in one day's time. The lowest time for this result abroad, where the old methods are still in force, is eleven weeks, exclusive of the bleaching that is reserved for the goods in fabric.

The earliest chemists and others who failed in their attempts to accomplish this result could not prevent the ruin of the fibre by chemical action; but Mr. Mudge succeeded in preparing a secret re-agent that fortifies the true fibre against the acids that attack the gums, etc. It was ignorance of this protective factor of his processes that made chemical experts sceptical of Mr. Mudge's ability to produce a strong linen fabric by his methods, and it was not until the mills at North Brookfield were well established in successful manufacture and were delivering to the trade goods declared by dealers to be the best of the kind ever offered, that the real value and importance of the discoveries were admitted. The steadily increasing development of the industry, which in six months' time, from the beginning of operations, was on a paying basis, has given practical significance to the theoretical claim of a year ago that it is possible, under these remarkably economic processes, to make pure linen as easily and as cheaply as cotton goods are made, and with much larger profits to the manufacturers and dealers.

Though at present the mills are only making "Oxbrook" towels (71 per cent. linen to 29 per cent. cotton) and "Oxolint," a pure linen absorbent, the demand for these products is so great that elaborate plans for the extension of the plant have been placed under contract. The Company is now getting special machinery to inaugurate the manufacture of all-linen goods in addition to its "Oxbrook" and "Oxolint" output. The all-linen will be the main feature of future manufacture. The prompt

commercial recognition of the industry is a forecast of its brilliant financial success. The company can make from its process fibre any kind of goods from crash to the finest quality of linen; and it is certain that its ability to produce a perfect linen yarn from flax in the course of twelve hours' time will revolutionize the textile industry in time and free this country from dependence for its linen upon foreign manufacture.

Though the company was compelled to order from England the machinery for spinning fine linen yarn, and must wait another two or three months for its delivery and installation, it has nevertheless made a coarse-weave all-linen towel that all experimental dealers have approved as a complete commercial demonstration of the processes. The result is the more interesting for the reason that fibre experts, not excepting one in the government service, declared a year ago that it was impossible to produce a strong, firm fibre suitable to spinning by any known chemical process. That it is unwise even for "experts" to be too emphatic in declarations as to what "cannot be done" is being proved continually by scientific genius; and the linen experts who have tested the Oxford Linen Mills products have had to confess themselves fairly beaten. But the Oxford Linen Mills have still another surprise for the commercial world in the mastery of the ramie problem. For more than twenty-five years efforts to treat this most valuable fibre more economically than by the slow hand-process of oriental countries have been ineffectual, even though the government itself has taken a lively interest in the matter. The company has put out a quantity of ramie towels woven at the North Brookfield mill from fibre prepared by the Oxford processes with even more successful results than have attended the manufacture of linen yarn, if that be possible. Clearly the company has a great future.

There are important phases of the subject and interesting particulars that cannot be considered in this limited space, but there is an illustrated and attractive booklet "No. 71," issued by the Oxford Linen Mills. Copies may be obtained free by writing or applying to the Sterling Debenture Corporation, Brunswick Building, Madison Square, New York City. It photographically contrasts the ancient methods of preparing flax by the European peasantry and the rapid processes employed here.



BUILDING FOR OLD AGE

Children particularly need food containing the elements that make the soft gray matter in the nerve cells and in brain.

When brain and nerves are right the life forces select the bone- and teeth-making parts and the muscle-making elements and day by day build up a perfect and powerful structure.

So people should let the youngsters have

Grape-Nuts

and Cream every day. They like it and you can be absolutely certain you are feeding them wisely and scientifically.

A few weeks will prove it to you by the appearance and activity of the child.

Do your duty by the children.

"There's a Reason"

Postum Cereal Co., Ltd., Battle Creek, Mich., U. S. A.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

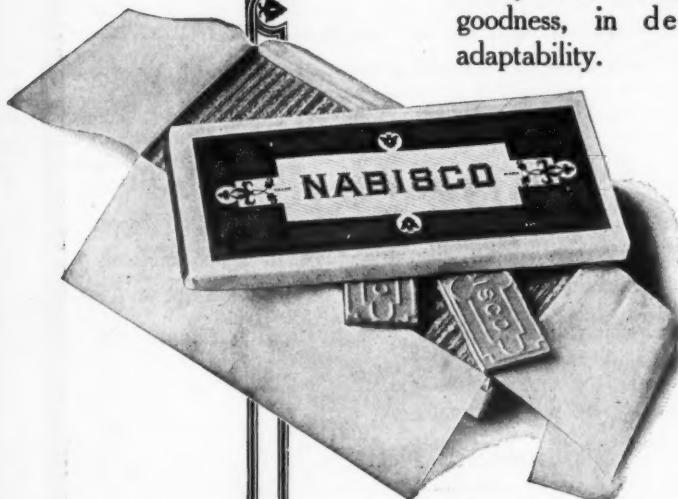
Away from the Commonplace

—Into the realm of the rarest confection delights — you will class

NABISCO

SUGAR WAFERS

Out of the ordinary in dainty form, in delightful goodness, in dessert adaptability.



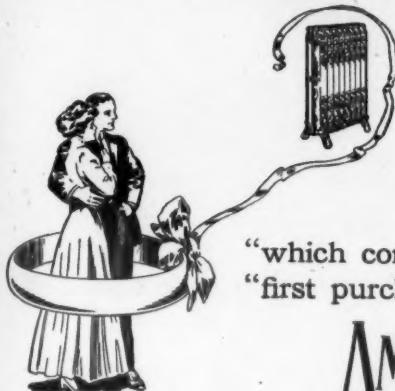
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Cent Tins*

Also in
twenty-five
cent tins

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Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

The bride's wise choice



"From our new cottage home
"I shall omit the useless in-
"ner doors, mantels, extra
"chimneys, fancy lamps that
"are never lighted, books
"which are never read, vases
"which contain no flowers, etc. Let us
"first purchase an outfit of

AMERICAN & IDEAL RADIATORS & BOILERS

"because they save much coal, need no repairs, keep all ashes, smoke,
"and soot out of the living-rooms, are safe, and will last as long as
"the cottage shall stand. These savings and economies will help in
"time to pay for the finer furnishings."

"The cottage will be kept cozily warm all over, and the family health thus
"protected. If we prosper and move to a larger house, we will get our full
"money back, or 10% to 15% higher rental to cover cost, as IDEAL Boilers
"and AMERICAN Radiators do not rust out or wear out."

Those who know that happiness depends so much upon the comfort and healthfulness of the home, whether newlyweds or longweds, are urged to write us at once.



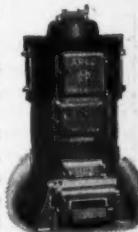
A. No. 3-22 IDEAL Boiler and 600 ft. of 3-in. AMERICAN Radiators, costing the owner \$945, were used to Hot-Water heat this cottage.



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At these prices the goods can be bought of any reputable, competent Fitter. This did not include cost of labor, pipe, valves, freight, etc., which installation is extra and varies according to climatic and other conditions.

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IDEAL Water Boiler

Showrooms
in all large cities

AMERICAN RADIATOR COMPANY

Write Dept. 39
CHICAGO



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Our first announcement of the latest GILLETTE achievement—the New Pocket Edition—the GILLETTE Safety Razor in such compact form that it can be carried like a card case in the waistcoat pocket, or slipped into the side of a traveling bag.

Same size blade as before, same principle; but neater, more workmanlike, the most perfect shaving implement in the world—as compact and as beautifully finished as a piece of jewelry—and the blades are fine.

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Gillette Safety Razor

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YOUR Folks Used to Make Good Gravy—maybe they do yet, but in many a household it is a lost art.

¶ Grandmother's gravy—how smooth it was—how good it tasted! That was because she thickened it with Kingsford's Corn Starch and *not* with flour. Flour makes lumpy gravy and that raw taste.

KINGSFORD'S CORN STARCH

is the right thickening for gravies, for sauces and cream soups.

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¶ *A Word to Kingsford Friends*—Send us the name of any young housewife who thinks that Corn Starch is used only for puddings or desserts; we will send her our new little Book E, "What a Cook Ought to Know About Corn Starch." We will gladly mail you without cost a copy too if you like.

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We want every woman in America to send for a liberal free sample of Milkweed Cream and our booklet telling of the wonderful results that follow its daily use. Write to-day before you forget.

This is the one toilet cream that has proved its merit.

Milkweed Cream is not a new thing. Your grandmother used it and her matchless complexion testified to its worth.

It is nature's own aid to beauty—a skin tonic. A very little applied gently to the face, neck and hands, night and morning, cleans out the tiny pores, stimulates them to renewed activity, and feeds and nourishes the inner skin and surrounding tissues. The certain result of this is a complexion clear and brilliant in coloring—a skin soft and smooth without being shiny—plump, rounded cheeks from which all lines and wrinkles have been taken away.



Milkweed Cream is good for all complexion faults. It has

a distinct therapeutic action on the skin and its glands. Excessive rubbing or kneading is not only unnecessary, but is liable to stretch the skin and cause wrinkles. Milkweed Cream is absorbed by the skin like dry ground absorbs rain. Thus the pores are not clogged up, irritated or enlarged as they are by having stuff forced into them by rubbing. Milkweed Cream is dainty, fastidious and refined—a necessary toilet luxury for every woman who values her personal appearance.

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Every woman is directly interested in—

The New "DUB-L TOP"
prevents "running ladders" in your hose.

The New "WYDE TOP"
provides greater width where most needed.

The New "DOUBLEX"
re-enforced Heel, Sole and Toe of specially prepared yarn; doubles the wear at vulnerable points.

FOR WOMEN

E 960 Women's "ONYX" Black "DUB-L TOP" Cobweb Lisle—resists the ravages of the Garter Clasp, 50c. per pair

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134 Women's "ONYX" Black Pure Thread Silk "DUB-L TOP" and Lisle lined sole. Special \$1.75 per pair
106 Pure Thread Silk, Black, White, Tan, Gold, Copenhagen Blue, Wistaria, Amethyst, Taupe, Bronze, American Beauty, Pongee, all Colors to match shoe or gown. Undoubtedly the best value in America. Pure Dye. Every Pair Guaranteed. \$2.25 per pair

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ROOMS: Every room an outside room. Lavish in Light and Air.

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The Public Rooms are spacious, high, distinguished.

VALETS AND MAIDS—that recognize personal attendance as their principal business—not an “extra”—ready to brush a suit or button

a gown on the instant. And to do it properly.

PRICES—not cheap—but excessively low for what they bring.

Rooms with bath begin at \$3.00 a day.

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And if you name your train, the Wolcott porter will meet you.

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Gentlemen:

Some Turkish tobacco costs 4c per pound, and some cost \$2.50 plus the duty.

Not more than 6 per cent of Turkish tobacco is deemed fit for Egyptian Deities.

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"The Utmost in Cigarettes"

An army of men are employed in Turkey just to get the cream of the crop for these cigarettes.

They cover the country on horseback to pick out the best leaves grown.

Then these leaves are examined; one by one, and most of them are discarded.

A man will often spend two weeks to pick out 20 pounds of leaves good enough for Egyptian Deities.

Then we blend the leaves from sixty bales—from a dozen sections—from two or three crops.

Thus we get an inimitable flavor which never varies much.

It is this infinite pains—this disregard of cost—this skill acquired through decades of experience—that make Egyptian Deities the premier cigarettes of the world.

Beyond these no man can go. Were you willing to pay ten times the price, no skill on earth could produce anything better.

And no man has yet produced a cigarette approaching this exquisite flavor.

10 for 25 cents. Cork Tips or Plain

Every box of "EGYPTIAN DEITIES" bears the fac-simile signature of S. ANARGYROS
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Kleinert's name on a Dress Shield is a Guarantee of Quality - A Merit Mark of Twenty-five Years' Standing

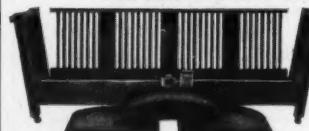


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Put the "Knock - Down" Sections together yourself and save 1-2 to 2-3rds



the stain furnished and the piece is finished.

Guaranteed to be satisfactory

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You save, (1) all the dealer's profit; (2) three-fourths the freight; (3) cost of finishing; (4) expense in crating and packing; (5) in the factory cost; (6) in factory profit. Figure it out yourself.

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You take no risk. I absolutely guarantee that you will be perfectly satisfied with everything you buy. If not, one week's money will be instantly refunded.

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BROOKS MANUFACTURING CO.

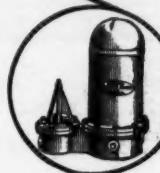
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This tale is so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the living, breathing West, that the reader is likely to imagine that he himself is cantering over the grassy plains and imbibing the pure air of the prairie in company with Chip, Weary, Happy Jack and the other cowboys of the Flying U ranch. The story is a comedy, but there are dramatic touches in it that will hold the reader breathless. Pathos and humor are adroitly commingled and the author seems to be as adept at portraying one as the other. The "Little Doctor" is a picture to live by, and the author doesn't blame Chip in the least for falling in love with her. The reviewer's task would be a pleasant one if all his work had to do with such wholesome and delightful stories as "Chip, of the Flying U." Beautifully illustrated in colors by Mr. Charles M. Russell, the greatest painter of cowboy life in America. **Price, \$1.25.** Sent postpaid by the publishers upon receipt of price.

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Have you solved the "Home Comfort" problem for this coming summer?

Are you planning to put the coal range out of commission?

Will you do the family boiling, stewing and frying in a sane and restful manner over a stove that *does not overheat the kitchen?*

You can do all this with the



NEW PERFECTION Wick Blue Flame Oil Cook-Stove

The "New Perfection" is different from all other oil stoves. It has a substantial CABINET TOP like the modern coal range, with a commodious shelf for warming plates and keeping food hot after cooked—also drop shelves on which the coffee pot or teapot may be placed after removing from burner—every convenience, even to bars for holding towels. Nothing adds more to the pleasure of a summer home than a "New Perfection" Oil Cook-Stove in the kitchen. Made in three sizes. Can be had either with or without Cabinet Top. If not at your dealer's, write our nearest agency.



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"Guess I'll have to try some of these"

A wise decision, and one which every discriminating man makes once he has examined the genuine Cooper's. You should wear Cooper's—it is the underwear of character and quality. Union suits and two piece suits. All sizes and colors. Try a silk lace suit for spring and summer wear.

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IS ATTACHED THIS WAY
TO EVERY PAIR OF THE
GENUINE—BE SURE
IT'S THERE.

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Perfect sock support,
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Makers of
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THE LATEST SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY



Bright, sparkling, beautiful. For brilliancy
the equal of the greatest diamonds, standing all test and
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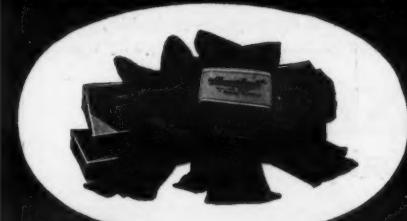
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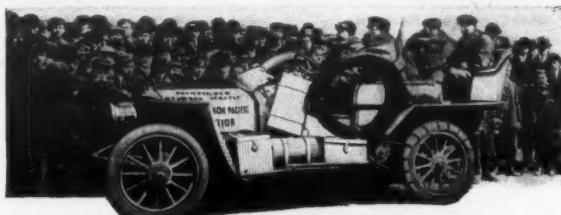
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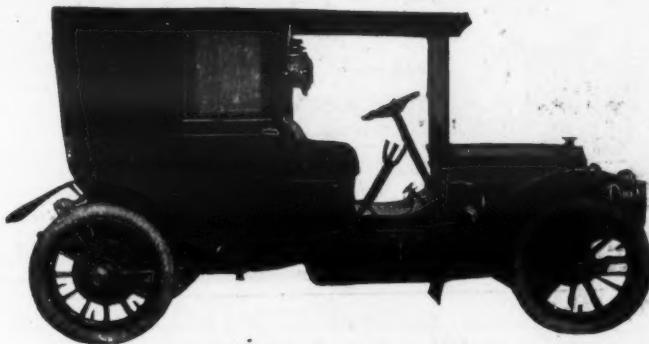
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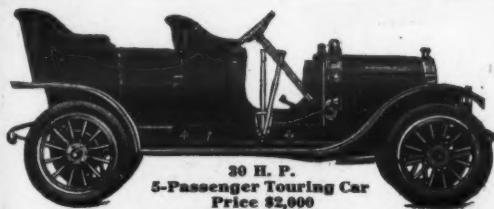


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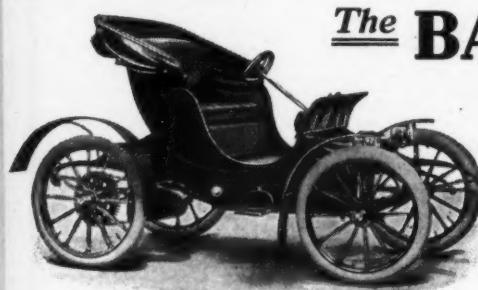


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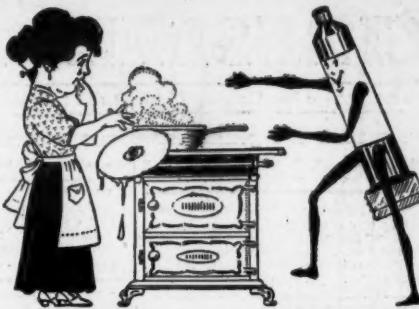
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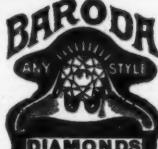
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Notable Contributors to the May Edison Record List

MABEL MCKINLEY is a notable addition to the staff of Edison artists. She is a composer of great merit, the possessor of a delightfully sweet soprano voice and a universal favorite on the stage. Her own song, "Golden Rod," is her contribution to the May Edison Records. Press Eldridge, "Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Fun," enters the Phonograph field with a heart-to-heart talk called "A Confidential Chat," the biggest hit in his whole repertoire of monologues. 38 other Records, standard Edison and Amberol, all by artists of the highest class, are included in the May list. Hear them at your dealer's.

Edison Phonographs are sold at the same prices everywhere in the United States—\$12.50 to \$125.00. Standard Edison Records, 35c. Edison Amberol Records, 50c. Edison Grand Opera Records, 75c.

Ask your dealer or write us for catalogs of Edison Phonographs and Records.

NATIONAL PHONOGRAPH CO., 38 Lakeside Ave., Orange, N. J.

The Edison Business Phonograph saves the time of high-salaried men and increases their letter-writing capacity



Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

**"A Kalamazoo
Direct to You"**

TRADE MARK REGISTERED

Cash or Credit Take Your Choice

May We Quote Our Factory Price On "A Kalamazoo Direct to You"

WE want to save you 30 cents on every dollar of your stove money. Selling and shipping direct from our Factory to you at Factory price, makes your stove or range cost you at least 30 cents on the dollar less than you would have to pay a dealer anywhere for a stove or range of quality equal to "A Kalamazoo Direct to You."

Perhaps we can save you *more*. It depends on the style of range or stove you choose. We have proven the saving to thousands of stove buyers throughout the United States. But the saving of the money isn't all. We will give you a more satisfactory stove or range than you can possibly buy from anyone, anywhere.

We've been in the stove manufacturing business too long—and our square dealing is too well known to make these statements if we couldn't prove them.

Just The Stove You Want For Cash Or Credit

Our Selling Plan heretofore has been for cash—but we know there are thousands of responsible people who would like to take advantage of our money-saving prices, but as a matter of convenience to them, for the time being, they want to buy on a charge account.

We want your order—whether you are a cash buyer or whether you want to buy on credit—consequently we will give you your choice. Responsible people can buy a "Kalamazoo Direct to You" on either plan. Suit your own convenience—and make the savings which our factory price to you direct enables you to make.

360 Days' Approval Test On Your Stove Or Range

This is the plan we've followed for years. We've shipped over a hundred thousand Kala-

mazoo Stoves and Ranges direct from factory to users on 360 Days' Approval Test. It is a long test. If any range or stove that we sell does not prove to be exactly as we represent it to be in every detail, during the 360 Days, then we'll take it back and refund all of the money you have paid us. No other range or stove manufacturer in the United States makes this liberal offer.

We Pay all Freight Charges and Guarantee Sale Delivery

Our Stoves and Ranges are all priced delivered at your station—all charges prepaid.

You know exactly what you've got to pay for your stove when you order from us and there will be no freight charges to pay when the stove arrives—thus you can tell immediately just how much you save.

Let Us Send You Our Big Free Factory Stove Book

Showing Over 300 Different Styles and Prices of Ranges—Cook Stoves—Heating Stoves and Gas Ranges. Ask for Catalogue No. 534

This book fully explains our selling plan and our complete line of stoves and ranges. It will be sent you postage paid and is our only salesmen.

This book shows you more styles and sizes of stoves and ranges for every purpose than could be found at any dealers. It tells you just how a good stove should be made—And how our direct-from-factory-to-you plan saves money for you. In writing, mention kind, style and size of stove you want. Please write for the book today. Just a postal will bring it.

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**Kalamazoo Stove
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WOULD YOU accept a stranger's note? No. Then why accept from a stranger any other promise to pay.

A fire insurance policy is such a promise. Ought you to accept it without knowing all about the Company? Your usual business confidence is based on knowledge. Why make an exception in that part of your business which deals with insurance? A name is worth nothing on any kind of a promise to pay unless it is backed by character and resources.

THE HARTFORD FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY favors insurance knowledge, particularly about itself. Its promise to pay has never gone to protest. Its obligations to its policy holders are backed with such a good reputation and such ample financial resources that the more you know about it the more you will want protection by its policies.

It has published a book "Fire Prevention and Fire Insurance" which contains in separate chapters valuable information for Householders, Merchants and Manufacturers.

It ought to be in the hands of every property owner in America. It may save you thousands of dollars. It is free. Send for it.



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Quick, Simple, Clean

You need no mug or soap case.

No wetting the face and rubbing the soap in before lathering up.

No second lathers when first has dried, because Berset doesn't dry on the face.

No wet soap to put back in mug or case, to gather dust and dirt.

Every bit, for every shave, has never been touched by face, hair, dust or air.

And, best of all,

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IS THE HEALING LATHER

Composed of Glycerine and Cocoanut Oil, it heals the skin, keeps it smooth and soft, prevents soreness and dryness, and is guaranteed to contain no free alkali.

At all barbers' and dealers'. 25 cents a large tube.

Send dealer's name and 4 cents for 10-cent sample tube.

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The only shaving brushes whose bristles are held in a setting of hard, vulcanized rubber.

This setting is patented and therefore not possible to be used by others. Look for the name on each brush.

Guaranteed *never* to lose a bristle from their setting. At all barbers' and dealers'. 25c., 50c., 75c. to \$6.00.

To the average man we commend the \$1.00 brush.

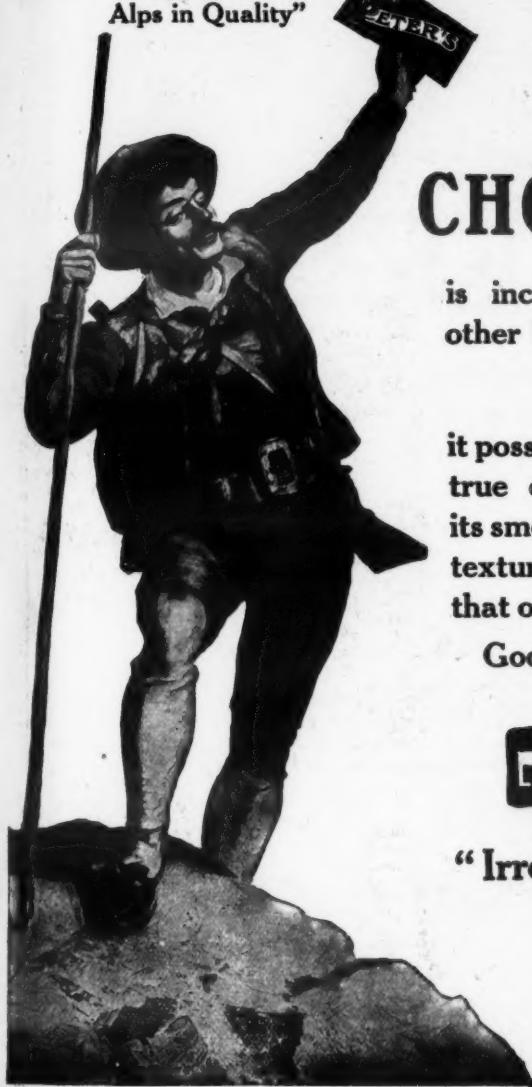
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Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

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CHOCOLATE

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it possesses above all others the
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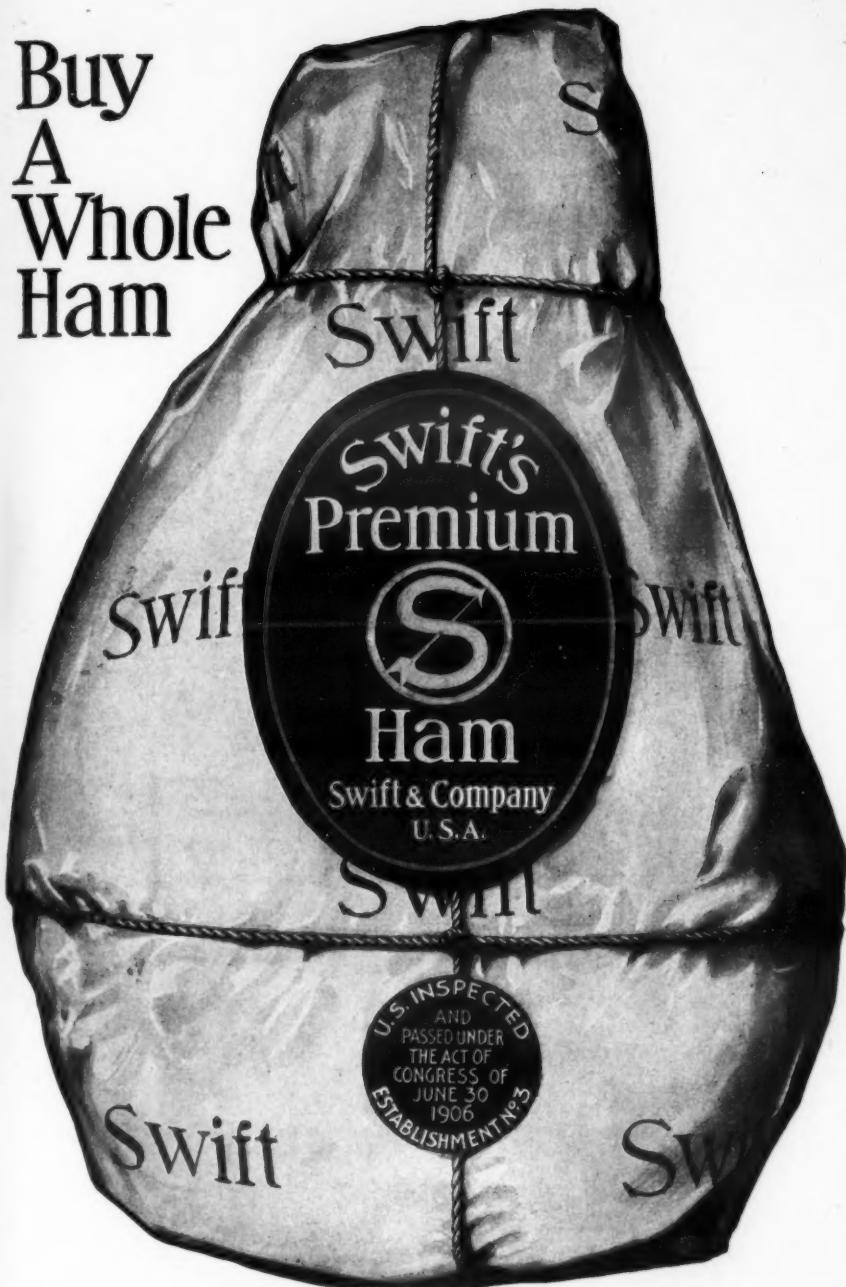
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NEW YORK

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

Hasn't scratched yet!!!

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

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GEM JUNIOR Safety Razor

WITH
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The NEW BAR (Pat. No. 686,143) gives the GEM Junior Safety Razor a big advantage over all other shaving devices. Without it no safety razor of any make, at any price, can possibly do what it makes practical.

Almost any razor can shave on the level, but the face isn't level. With the NEW BAR the razor edge doesn't have to dig down into ruts after short, stiff hairs, but the skin is smoothened and the hairs raised to meet the coming blade. It makes a clean sweep of the bristles, and leaves the face smooth and comfortable.

We have been 30 years making the finest steel cutlery. The GEM Junior BLADE is one of the results of that experience. The steel is the finest known, and the rolling, tempering, polishing, and sharpening have been reduced to a science. The keen edge lasts, and when dulled can be renewed by stropping. The NEW BAR and GEM Junior BLADE combined make this razor indispensable to men who shave.

The Complete One Dollar GEM Junior Outfit includes a handsomely finished silver-nickel-plated frame, extension and stropping handles, 7 selected blades of the finest steel, and a substantial case.

If you don't care to stroop, we will.

New Blades for Old, 7 exchanged for 25c.
EXTRA SET, 7 BLADES, 50c

See that you get a sealed package.

Don't take a substitute. If your dealer is behind the times, send us One Dollar and we will mail the complete GEM Junior outfit, postpaid, to your address.

Booklet "Shaveology" free on request.

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